



Asbestos Health Effects Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. Who is at risk of asbestos exposure?

- A. Construction workers, janitors, maintenance staff, HVAC contractors, plumbers, mechanics, transportation workers, electricians, fire-fighters, and asbestos abatement workers may have higher exposure levels than the general population. Workers in these industries are at an increased risk for developing asbestos-caused disease. These workers also may bring asbestos into their homes on their shoes, clothes, or other objects, exposing other household members. Residents conducting their demolition or remodeling are also at risk. Asbestos was widely used in building materials such as pipe insulation, popcorn ceilings, floor tiles, etc., beginning in the 1970s and can still be found in building materials produced today.

Q. Is there a medical test to show whether I have been exposed to asbestos?

- A. If you have a history of being around asbestos, your doctor can conduct several medical tests to help diagnose asbestos-related diseases. These tests may be used to detect early signs of lung changes caused by asbestos, but they cannot detect the fibers themselves or determine the extent of exposure or predict future disease.

Q. Can asbestos be removed from the lungs?

- A. No known method exists to remove asbestos fibers from the lungs once inhaled. Sometimes the asbestos is cleared or broken down naturally by the immune system in the lungs. Whether this occurs depends on the size and shape of the asbestos inhaled.

Q. How can workers protect themselves from asbestos exposure?

- A. Workers concerned about asbestos exposure in the workplace should discuss the situation with other employees, their employee health and safety representative, and their employers. If necessary, OSHA can provide more information or do an inspection. Information about regional offices can be found on OSHA's website at <https://www.osha.gov/html/RAmap.html>.

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