



Prevent Poisoning: Tips from the Blue Ridge Poison Center

ASBESTOS

WHAT IS IT?

Asbestos [as-BEST-ohs] is a mineral made up of strong, tiny, crystal fibers. For centuries, asbestos has been mined and used for its ability to resist heat and fire. In the 1970's, exposure to asbestos was found to cause illness, and since then its use has declined significantly. However it may still be found in many buildings or products, particularly if they are old. Common asbestos sources include:



- Roof and home shingles
- Insulation
- Acoustic tiles
- Vinyl flooring
- Flame-resistant clothing
- Laboratory equipment
- Furnaces
- Ceiling tiles

HOW DOES ASBESTOS HARM US?

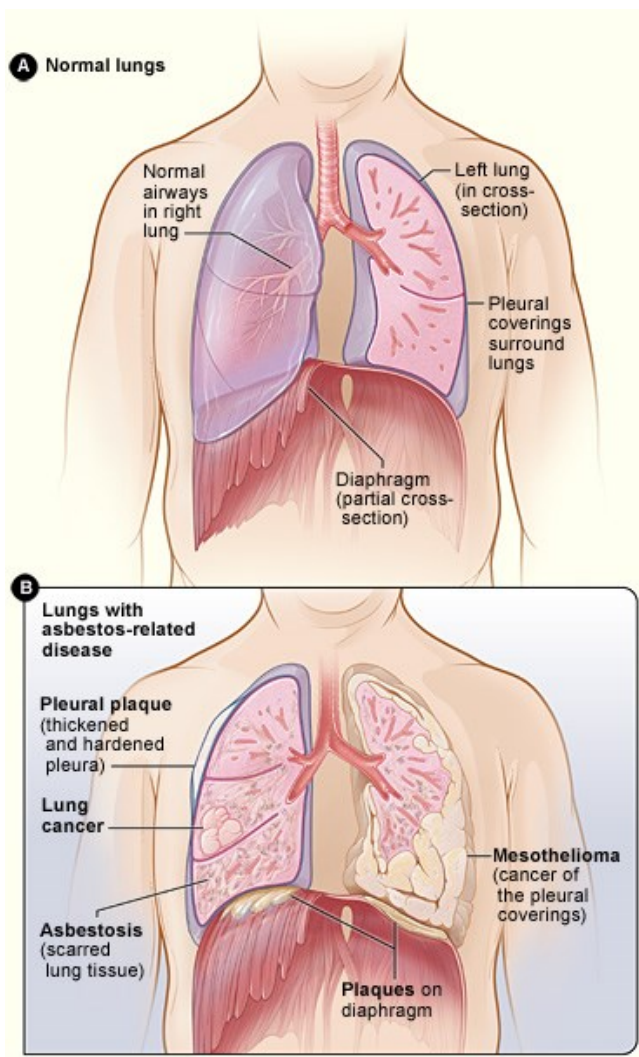
When something made of asbestos is damaged or disturbed (such as by building demolition, fire, or renovation), the fibers can separate and become airborne. These fibers are too small to see with the naked eye, but if inhaled into the lungs they can cause damage. The risk of damage increases the longer a person is exposed to airborne asbestos. Cigarette smoking also increases the risk of damage.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- People who have jobs that expose them to asbestos such as mining, manufacturing, fire fighting, or construction.
- Family members of those who are exposed to asbestos at work could inhale asbestos fibers clinging to the worker's clothing or hair.
- People who live near facilities that process asbestos can be exposed when airborne fibers travel in the wind.
- People living or working in buildings with damaged or deteriorating sources of asbestos.



¹ Mazurek JM, Syamlal G, Wood JM, Hendricks SA, Weston A. Malignant Mesothelioma Mortality — United States, 1999–2015. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2017;66:214–218.



CONDITIONS CAUSED BY ASBESTOS INCLUDE:

- **Abtestosis:** permanent lung scarring.
- **Mesothelioma:** cancer of the thin membranes surrounding the lungs and other organs.
- **Lung Cancer**

Symptoms of these health conditions may include chest pain, coughing, shortness of breath, weakness, pain in the chest or abdomen, and weight loss.

The effects of asbestos exposure develop very slowly. Effects may not be seen for 15-40 years. Once symptoms develop, however, victims rarely survive longer than a year¹.

Image courtesy of National Heart Lung and Blood Institute - Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

For help with any suspected poisoning or overdose.
1-800-222-1222 or www.poisonhelp.org.
Fast, free, private.



The **Blue Ridge Poison Center** at the University of Virginia Health System has been proudly serving Virginia since 1978. Visit our website for flyers, poisoning prevention news, tips, and more: www.brpc.virginia.edu. Please share this flyer!