

A guide to asbestos related disease including mesothelioma



Being diagnosed with an asbestos related illness is devastating for all the family. We are here to help with your claim.

What is asbestos and what illness does it cause?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibre that was widely used in construction and other industries until the late 1990s. Historically, before its dangers were known, asbestos was often used in buildings for insulation, flooring, roofing, and was sprayed on ceilings and walls. Its use is now banned in the UK, but buildings constructed before the year 2000 may still have asbestos in them.

Where asbestos buildings remain intact, it poses very little risk. It's when it's damaged or disturbed that tiny asbestos fibres can be released into the air and thereafter enter into the lungs. Breathing in asbestos fibres can damage your lungs and their lining.

The symptoms of asbestos-related conditions take many years, even decades, to appear after the original exposure.

Exposure to asbestos can cause a range of illnesses, including:

- Mesothelioma
- Lung cancer
- Asbestosis
- Pleural thickening

Who is at risk from asbestos exposure?

Asbestos-related disease is caused by breathing in asbestos fibres, and often results in a scarring condition of the lung. People who have worked in industries where asbestos was heavily used particularly in 1970s to 1990's, are more at risk from asbestos exposure.

These industries may include:

- shipyards
- construction sites
- boiler and engine rooms
- hospitals
- power stations
- boiler makers
- glass factories

Asbestos-related diseases are not limited to workers but can also affect members of their families, who may have developed an asbestos-related disease or cancer as a result of being exposed to asbestos fibres on work clothes.

The time between exposure to asbestos and the occurrence of lung cancer is often 20 to 30 years or more but varies in every individual case. If the employer has gone out of business or is no longer operating, a claim for compensation can still be made against the insurance company which provided insurance at the time of the exposure.

What is mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma is often considered the most devastating of the asbestos-related diseases as there is no cure, and few victims survive more than 18 months after diagnosis.

The average life expectancy is 18 – 31 months after diagnosis, but prognosis may improve with treatment. Symptoms can include chest pain, shortness of breath and general fatigue.

What are mesothelioma symptoms?

Mesothelioma symptoms can take 10 – 50 years to emerge after initial exposure to asbestos. Symptoms are often mistaken for less serious illnesses, which can complicate early diagnosis.

Common Symptoms can include:

- Chest pain or abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fluid build up
- Fatigue
- Fever and night sweats
- Weight loss
- In more advanced cases, clubbed (swollen) fingertips
- Wheezing

Around 80% of mesothelioma cases occur in men. This reflects the greater likelihood of men having worked with asbestos in heavy industry or the armed forces. In 2004–12, almost four times as many men as women had mesothelioma. Mesothelioma is mostly diagnosed in people aged over 70.

How do I know if I was exposed to asbestos?

If you have no idea where you were exposed to asbestos, you may still claim compensation from the Government. If you were diagnosed with mesothelioma after July 25 2012 and are unable to trace the company where you were exposed to asbestos or the company's insurer, you will be eligible to receive 80% of the value of the average civil compensation claim from a central fund.

Am I able to make a claim for compensation for an asbestos disease?

If you have been diagnosed with asbestosis, mesothelioma, asbestos related lung cancer or pleural thickening in the last three years, you may be able to make a claim for compensation.

If you are claiming on behalf of a relative who died from mesothelioma, you have three years from the date your relative passed away.

Why should I make a claim for compensations for an asbestos disease?

The manufacturers of asbestos-containing products knew the health risks of asbestos decades before the public did. Instead of keeping people safe, these companies put profits first and actively concealed evidence that asbestos was dangerous. Eventually, the truth came out and these manufacturers faced thousands of claims from victims who developed mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases.

Asbestos disease compensation is claimed from the insurers of the company who caused the exposure to asbestos. Often these companies ceased to exist a long time ago but compensation would come from the insurers. Compensation awards to those suffering from mesothelioma or an asbestos related disease reflect a number of different issues, including:

- the illness itself
- loss of earnings
- any items you need to purchase as a result of the disease, from aids around the home to different foods to mobility aids
- an amount to reflect the care provided by friends or family
- care fees paid to professionals
- any losses to other family members
- travelling expenses to hospital or medical appointments.

Our Team

If someone you know has been diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease or mesothelioma, our skilled and compassionate solicitors are here to offer help with your claim. Use a local solicitor you can trust.



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