

A Quick Guide to Asbestos and Health Issues

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Unless you have been completely out of touch, you have probably heard all the hubbub about the dangers of asbestos. So, what is the big deal?

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Asbestos is a fibrous material that is highly resistant to burning. It has a long history. While it was first used on a large scale commercial basis at the turn of the twentieth century, it has actually been around much longer. In fact, the ancient Egyptians were known for using it burial clothes.

Common modern applications used to include building materials, products and automobile brake pads, which all required a fire resistant element. Asbestos is still used today, but on a fairly small scope. The reason has everything to do with health. Asbestos in and of itself is not harmful to people. What is harmful, however, is asbestos dust.

Asbestos dust is a vicious thing. Due to the chemical makeup of the material, the dust is like a cloud of fine glass particles. While they will not damage your skin, they do great damage to the lungs. Making matters worse, asbestos dust is so fine that it is easily raised from asbestos material like ceiling tiles and walls. Once in the air, it is all but invisible. Prolonged exposure, such as when working on or in a building with asbestos materials, can result in massive amounts of the toxic dust entering the lungs.

Once asbestos dust is in your lungs, you cannot expel it by coughing. That doesn't mean the body does not try. Asbestosis is scarring of the lungs from acid created by the body in an effort to get the asbestos dust out. If this process is allowed to occur for 10 to 20 years, the lungs may stop functioning because of excess scarring. If that sounds bad, it only gets worse. Asbestos dust can lead to terminal cancer in the form of mesothelioma. [What is Mesothelioma?]

Asbestos is an excellent fire resistant material that saves us from burning while killing us in a much slower manner. Since 1989, it has been banned in the United States in all but a few commercial areas. Gerard Simington is with FindAnAttorneyForMe.com - offering asbestos and mesothelioma legal information.