

Asbestos Alert

ASBESTOS? Don't Risk It!

Newcastle City Council recommends you:

- treat all fibro sheets **as if they contain asbestos** unless tested.
- use a **licensed asbestos removal contractor** to remove all materials containing asbestos.

These recommendations are enforced on all development approvals issued by Newcastle City Council.

ASBESTOS AND YOUR HEALTH

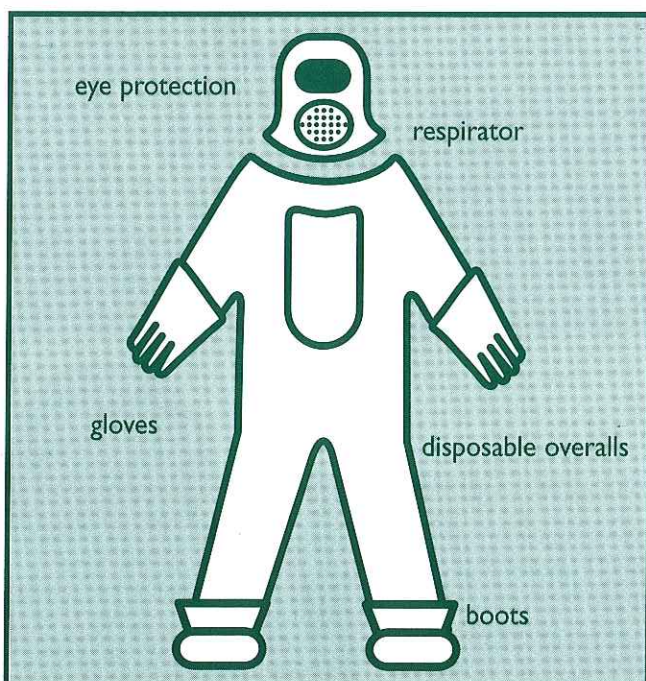
How Does Asbestos Enter the Body?

Asbestos is only a health risk when it crumbles and fine dust fibres are released into the air and breathed into our lungs.

As asbestos fibres are so light they can be suspended in the air for long periods, so when working with asbestos materials it is recommended to reduce the amount of dust created in order to reduce the amount of asbestos fibres in the air.

Once inhaled, asbestos particles are either spat out or swallowed. If swallowed, they enter the gastrointestinal tract. Extremely small particles are able to travel through the alveoli (the site of gas exchange in the lungs), where they form fibrous nodules of tissue. They spread to involve the area around the heart, the opening to the lungs and the abdominal lymph node. Some fibres are able to pierce the alveoli and build up in these areas of the lungs.

Asbestos can also lead to the development of corns or warts, suggesting that asbestos fibres are able to find a mode of entry through the skin.



Asbestos Related Diseases

Asbestos related diseases have a delay period usually of around 20 to 40 years from first exposure and asbestos diseases can appear or progress even after a person is no longer exposed.

Asbestos diseases mainly occur within people who work in occupations where exposure to asbestos is constant, such as in the manufacturing, installation and / or removal of asbestos products industries. It is very rare that homeowners will develop asbestos related diseases when renovating their homes. Safety methods should however be employed at all times to avoid exposure to asbestos, as there is no known safe level of exposure.

Asbestosis: is the scarring of the lung tissue that can result from the inhalation over a period of years of substantial amount of chrysolite. This results in breathlessness, which may lead to disability, and in some cases death. Asbestosis cannot be reversed by treatment.

Lung Cancer: risk is related to the amount of fibre inhaled and is also greatly increased in persons who also smoke cigarettes. No safe level of asbestos exposure to prevent lung cancer has been identified. Treatment of this form of lung cancer may be effective through early diagnosis and surgical removal of lesions.

Mesothelioma: is cancer of the pleura (outer lung lining) or the peritoneum (the lining of the abdominal cavity). Crocidolite (blue fibres) has the most potent effect in producing this cancer compared to other asbestos fibres, with chrysolite alone having caused few pleural mesothelioma and having caused no peritoneal mesothelioma.

Other disease resulting from asbestosis exposure include gastrointestinal cancer (oesophagus, stomach, colon and rectum), cancer of the larynx, pleural plaques, pleural effusion, adhesion, calcification, corns and warts.

Working With Asbestos

The best way to prevent the inhalation / absorption of asbestos is to minimise the release of asbestos dust and fibres into the air. Below are a list of safety precautions you should consider when renovating:

- Keep children and onlookers well away from the work area;
- Wear overalls (preferably with head covering), gum boots or similar and an appropriate respirator. When finished working with asbestos, remove clothes and wash separately to non-contaminated clothes.
- When using disposable cover-alls and masks, place these items in bags for removal with other asbestos waste.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the work area.
- Work in well ventilated areas wherever possible.
- Do not use power tools (abrasive cutters, sanders, etc) as they generate dust and may release asbestos fibres into the air. Instead, always use hand tools.
- Do not drill or cut into fibro. Instead replace sheets with a non-asbestos product.
- Wet down materials to reduce the release of dust.
- Use drop sheets to collect debris.
- Dispose of small asbestos pieces and collected dust in plastic bags marked "asbestos waste".
- Wet clean or use only approved vacuum cleaners. Do not sweep or use household vacuum cleaners to clean up asbestos waste as they may release fibres into the air.
- Do not reuse asbestos sheets.
- The reuse of grey, brown or blue asbestos is illegal.
- Contact the Work Cover Authority of NSW for vacuum cleaners approved as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2000.

Removal of Asbestos Sheeting

The following working procedures should be followed when removing asbestos sheeting products:

- For external work, close all windows and doors into the building;
- Wet clean gutters and collect any material that may accumulate there;
- Remove sheets with minimal breakage and lower rather than dropping them to the ground;
- Stack the removed sheets carefully on a ground sheet, wrap into bundles for disposal or place into a pre-lined disposal bin. Remember to cover the material before disposal;
- Clean any asbestos-cement residues with an approved vacuum cleaner.



Information Correct at June 2003

