



# A Guide To Mesothelioma

**B**eginning in the 1970s, Cooney & Conway was one of only a few law firms in the country representing plaintiffs in actions against companies responsible for causing their mesothelioma. From our office in Chicago, Cooney & Conway has successfully represented thousands of individuals across the United States that have been diagnosed with mesothelioma. As a result, have developed an unmatched expertise in the area of asbestos litigation. All of the asbestos attorneys at Cooney & Conway are considered leaders in the field and can handle your mesothelioma case regardless of where your asbestos exposure occurred.

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# What is Mesothelioma?

**M**esothelioma is a rare and aggressive cancer that forms on the protective lining covering the lungs, abdomen, testicles, or heart. Mesothelioma is caused by exposure to asbestos. Contrary to some belief, mesothelioma is not hereditary and its only known cause is exposure to asbestos fibers. This fatal disease can lay dormant for years or decades before developing. While there is no cure for mesothelioma, treatment options are available to reduce symptoms and help improve quality of life while living with the disease. Many symptoms of mesothelioma can also appear as the result of other, less serious diseases or illnesses, and are commonly mistaken for more minor ailments. Often, mesothelioma symptoms persist for months before a patient is properly diagnosed.

Being aware of the symptoms, particularly if you have a known exposure to asbestos, can improve the chances of obtaining the earliest possible diagnosis. Early diagnosis can result in more effective mesothelioma treatment options.

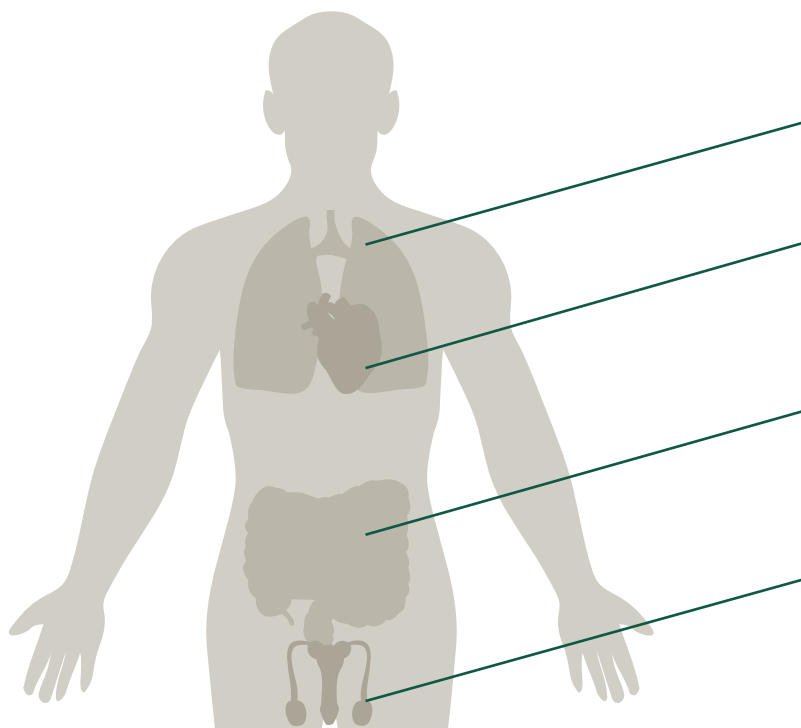
While there is no cure for mesothelioma, prompt and effective treatment can help alleviate painful symptoms and slow down cancer's pace to provide patients with longer and better lives.

## Symptoms & Signs of Mesothelioma

- Coughing
- Fatigue
- Pain in lower back or side of the chest
- Respiratory infection
- Shortness of breath or painful breathing
- Sudden and unexplained weight loss
- Bowel and digestive difficulties
- Fever
- Swelling and fluid buildup

# Types of Mesothelioma By Location

There are four different types of mesothelioma, diagnosed by the starting location of the cancer. What each type has in common, though, is that they are all linked to asbestos exposure. When dangerous, microscopic asbestos fibers find their way into our bodies, they embed themselves into the soft tissue linings of organs. Unfortunately, our bodies have no way to break down these microscopic fibers, so they remain, causing continual damage at the cellular level. This causes the damaged DNA formerly responsible for creating new, healthy cells to create cancerous cells instead. Knowing the basics of each mesothelioma type can aid in earlier diagnosis, which, in turn, can help to extend the life of the individual through proper treatment.



**Pleural Mesothelioma**



**Precardial Mesothelioma**



**Peritoneal Mesothelioma**



**Testicular Mesothelioma**





# Pleural Mesothelioma

The most common type of mesothelioma is pleural mesothelioma, which is caused by inhaling airborne asbestos fibers. This accounts for nearly 90% of all mesothelioma diagnoses. Pleural mesothelioma is cancer that afflicts the pleura, or the lining of our lungs, which is responsible for reducing internal friction while the lungs expand and deflate as they work. Damage caused by this cancer results in scarring that thickens the pleura, making breathing difficult and increasing the chances of fluid buildup in the lungs.



Unfortunately, the early signs of pleural mesothelioma can be very mild, often resulting in a lack of diagnosis or misdiagnosis. Early signs and symptoms include:

- Chest pain or painful breathing
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Persistent coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Night sweats

As pleural mesothelioma progresses, additional signs and symptoms can include:

- Nausea
- Fevers
- Faintness
- Difficulty swallowing
- Coughing up blood
- Pain in the chest, ribs, or lower back



## Peritoneal Mesothelioma

Peritoneal mesothelioma is the second most common type of mesothelioma and afflicts the peritoneum, or the abdominal cavity lining. The peritoneum is a thin, protective tissue that lines several major organs, including both intestines and the stomach. Peritoneal mesothelioma is most often caused by ingested asbestos fibers, whether by swallowing airborne particles or drinking contaminated water. The asbestos fibers are durable enough to survive digestion, which leads to them becoming trapped in the lining.

Symptoms of peritoneal mesothelioma can include:

- Abdominal pain
- Abdominal swelling
- Fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Loss of appetite
- Night sweats



## Precardial Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma that develops in the lining of the heart, or pericardium, is known as precardial mesothelioma. This is the second rarest form of mesothelioma, accounting for less than 1% of all diagnoses. The exact cause of precardial mesothelioma remains a mystery even today. Due to precardial mesothelioma affecting the heart, symptoms can be very severe, even in the earliest stages. It is also often misdiagnosed for other conditions such as heart failure, coronary heart disease, cardiomyopathy, and more.

Symptoms of precardial mesothelioma can include:

- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Persistent coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Night Sweats
- Heart palpitations
- Irregular heartbeat



## Testicular Mesothelioma

Testicular mesothelioma develops in the lining of the testicles, or tunica vaginalis, and is the rarest form of mesothelioma to be diagnosed. Causes for testicular mesothelioma are not easily traced. To date, the exact cause of this cancer has not been singled out. In later stages, tumors can develop on the surface of the testicles, appearing as firm, whitish nodules. Testicular mesothelioma is considered very aggressive, tending to spread rapidly and recur even after surgical removal of the tumors.

Symptoms of testicular mesothelioma can include:

- Mass on the testicals
- Testicular pain
- Thickening of the tunica vaginalis
- Swelling of the testicals
- Fluid buildup
- Fever
- Night Sweats



# Diagnosing Mesothelioma

**D**iagnosing mesothelioma requires multiple tests that help confirm its existence and to track its spread. If the cancer has spread (called metastasis), imaging tests will reveal this and help your doctor decide if more tests are needed and which treatments could work for you.

Mesothelioma can be confused with lung cancer, as it's a challenge to diagnose and has similarities. One of the biggest indicators of mesothelioma is when fluid builds up in the space around the lungs (pleural effusion) or in the abdomen (ascites). The fluid can be tested for cancer cells and is usually the first step to diagnosing mesothelioma. A biopsy will then be needed to confirm it's mesothelioma.

A biopsy is the only way a doctor can confirm most cancers. This happens after imaging has taken place and involves your doctor taking a small sample of the tissue in question and sending it to a lab for testing. If doing a biopsy isn't an option, there are others that can help provide a diagnosis that your doctor will recommend.

## Mesothelioma Diagnosis Options

To develop a treatment plan specific to you and your stage of cancer, your doctor will conduct or order:

- A physical exam and evaluation of your health history
- Blood tests
- X-rays
- Lung function tests
- A CT scan
- An MRI
- A PET-CT scan

All of these will help the doctor explain your diagnosis and staging.

# Mesothelioma Treatment Options



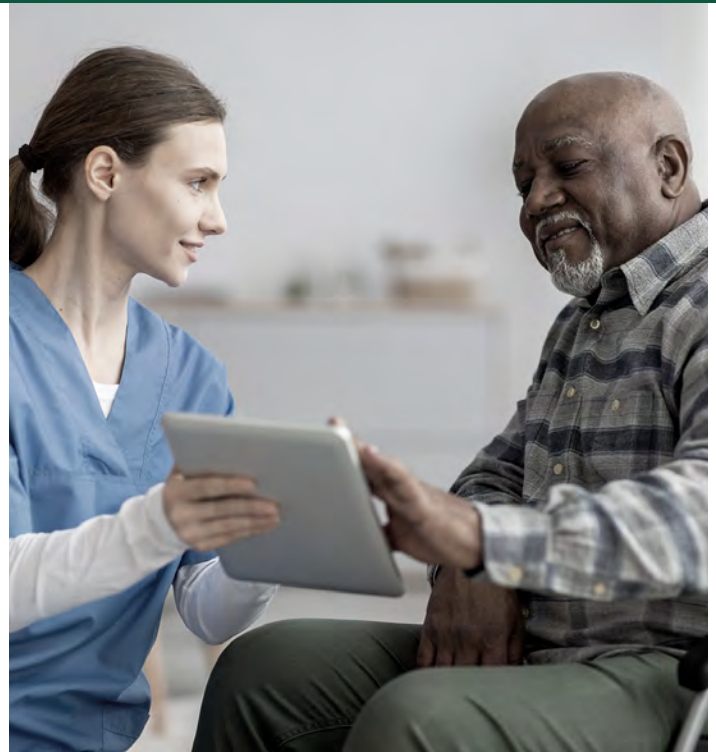
**W**hen you receive a cancer diagnosis, you won't only be dealing with one doctor. There is a multi disciplinary cancer care team that works to create your overall treatment plan, including physician assistants, oncology nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, counselors, and so on. An important part of mesothelioma care is not just keeping the cancer under control, but making sure that all symptoms and side effects are minimized.

Mesothelioma does not have a cure, per se, but there are many treatments that can be done to help minimize its effects on your life. It's important to discuss all of your treatment options with your doctor so that you can decide together which will fit your needs.



# Surgery

Surgery can be a treatment option for mesothelioma patients. This includes the removal of cancerous tissue, which may sometimes include the removal of the lining of the lung, the entire lung, the lining of abdominal organs, a portion of the diaphragm or a portion of the lining around the heart. This is a difficult surgery and the doctor will usually decide if this is a good option and will typically recommend chemotherapy or radiation therapy before or after surgery.



# Medication Therapies

The use of medication to destroy cancer cells is called systemic therapy. It is given through the bloodstream via intravenous (IV) tubes or in pill form (swallowed orally) to ensure it reaches all cancer cells throughout the body. Types of systemic therapy that can be used in mesothelioma treatment include chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and targeted therapy. They can be used one at a time or in combination with each other. They can also be used in a treatment plan that includes surgery and/or radiation therapy.

# Radiation Therapy

The use of high-energy x-rays or other particles to destroy cancer cells is called radiation therapy. The most common type is called external-beam radiation and radiation are given using a machine outside the body. Typically, radiation therapy has a schedule of a specific number of treatments over a period of time. This therapy is not as common with mesothelioma patients because it has been known to cause some uncomfortable or severe side effects.

# Coping With Mesothelioma Treatment

**M**esothelioma does not currently have a cure. However, several treatments exist that can prolong the life expectancy of patients after diagnosis and improve their quality of life—but that doesn't mean that the treatment is ever easy. Managing mesothelioma can be incredibly difficult both physically and emotionally and is often heavily impacted by the financial burdens of the treatment itself. So how can patients cope with that enormous weight on their shoulders?

## Coping Physically

Mesothelioma treatment often includes strict regimens full of medicines, methods, and any side effects that come with them, which can be exhausting and overwhelming. Therefore, it's important to talk regularly with your healthcare team about how you are feeling, especially concerning any new side effects you may be experiencing and any new or worsening symptoms. You may even find it helpful to keep a log of everything you are feeling physically (and emotionally) to ensure that nothing slips through the cracks to burden you further down the road.

Managing the pain and side effects that come along with mesothelioma treatment is known as palliative care, or supportive care. Unlike regular mesothelioma treatment, palliative care is specifically intended to provide relief to the patient, not just attack the cancer. Palliative treatment has been proven to prolong life, decrease the frequency and intensity of adverse effects, and generally improve mesothelioma patients' overall quality of life. In addition, this kind of care can help manage pain, weakness, fatigue, nausea, appetite issues, sleep issues, difficulty breathing, poor wellbeing, and more.

# Coping Emotionally

Being diagnosed with mesothelioma can have a devastating effect on the mental and emotional wellbeing of a person. Coming to terms and living with a severe illness can manifest feelings of sadness, anger, depression, anxiety, loss, hopelessness, and more. These emotions can heavily impact not only the patient themselves but also their family and friends. As a result, patients will sometimes attempt to cope by avoiding loved ones or pushing them away. They may even lash out at others in ways that seem unfair or unexpected. Still, it's essential to understand that their emotions may be stemming from the mental burdens of living with mesothelioma.

For these reasons, one of the most effective ways to support mesothelioma patients emotionally is to provide a healthy way for them to talk about their mental health. Having a designated listener can help them cope with and process difficult, and often painful, emotions. This listener can be a friend, counselor, therapist, social worker, or clergy member—all that truly matters is that they are heard and that their feelings are recognized as valid.





## Coping Financially

It's no secret that cancer treatment is wildly expensive. Mesothelioma patients may struggle to pay for everything that treatment entails, such as medications, chemotherapy, surgeries, inpatient and outpatient care, therapy, and more. Not to mention that patients may not be able to maintain a job after their diagnoses and will have to find a way to manage after the loss of income. Financial issues are the main reason patients may not follow or complete treatment for their mesothelioma, which puts their health and lives at risk.

The good news is that they may not have to pay for it all alone. Patients are encouraged to communicate with their healthcare teams about any financial concerns they may have, as they might have access to information and resources that could help. Financial assistance may also be available from different resources depending on the situation. These can include:

- **Mesothelioma lawsuits:** An attorney can help you build a case to file a mesothelioma lawsuit against the entity or entities responsible for your asbestos exposure.
- **Government programs:** VA benefits, Social Security benefits, and more may be available to help with finances. An experienced attorney will know who to target on behalf of the patient's unique circumstances.
- **Non-profit organizations:** Several non-profit organizations exist to provide financial assistance to mesothelioma patients and their families. Educating yourself on which organizations you can apply for can go a long way in receiving aid.

# How to Pursue a Legal Case for Mesothelioma

**F**or decades, we have built strong cases to pursue damages on behalf of our clients who have received diagnosis and treatment for asbestos-related cancers. Typically, this has included compensation for any expenses or losses incurred from exposure to asbestos, including diagnosis, treatments, lost wages, and any related costs.

The cost of getting the proper treatment for mesothelioma or lung cancer is often quite expensive, and the attorneys at Cooney & Conway, LLP. work hard to deliver the highest financial reward to our clients. The amount of compensation that mesothelioma victims and families can be awarded varies greatly and is dependent on each individual case.

Any person who is a victim of asbestos exposure and is seeking to file a lawsuit should immediately consult with an attorney to determine specific statutes of limitations that may apply to them. Most lawsuits require time for investigation and preparation, which must also be considered. The sooner that action is taken, the better.

Regardless of which state your asbestos exposure occurred, Cooney and Conway can take your case.



# Mesothelioma Lawsuits: The Steps

**T**he amount of compensation that mesothelioma victims and families can be awarded varies greatly and is dependent on each individual case. What one case was able to be compensated for isn't necessarily how it will be for another.

In pursuing a lawsuit, there are a few steps that take place.



## 1. Research

The first step in building an asbestos-related case is to find out which companies were responsible for exposing you or your loved one to asbestos. Some people know which asbestos products they worked with during their career, they just were never warned that it was hazardous to their health. Many others are unaware that some of the common products they used during their lives, whether on the job or in their personal lives, contained asbestos.

**Call us toll free today  
(800) 322-5573**

The experts at Cooney & Conway have an extensive bank of knowledge about how a person might have come into contact with asbestos products throughout his or her life, and we take the time to carefully listen to our clients and investigate all possible leads. We work tirelessly to find out who is responsible, and will go after those companies

## 2. File the Lawsuit

After we've done our research and compiled all the information we need, we then prepare to file the lawsuit against the companies that are responsible for your asbestos exposure. We determine which state it needs to be filed in, what type of claim it should be, and which defendants should be named in the lawsuit.

Many of the worst corporate offenders who used asbestos for decades have filed for bankruptcy due to the large number of cases against them. Some of these companies have set up large bankruptcy trusts to continue to pay for these claims, and the experts at Cooney & Conway can obtain compensation from these trusts if you have been exposed to that company's asbestos product. Partner John Cooney is one of the main architects of these bankruptcy trusts, having been a member on the creditor's committee for the Halliburton, United States Gypsum, Owens Corning, Armstrong World Industries, and Bondex asbestos trusts, among many others. John was selected by his peers to be the chairman of many of these trusts. We have the extensive background to help you navigate your way through this complicated system.

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## 3. Activities Before Trial

After the lawsuit has been filed, the discovery phase begins. This is the time where all the parties involved find out all the necessary information before the case goes to trial. The discovery process includes depositions, written interrogatories, affidavits, and many other forms of written discovery. The attorneys at Cooney & Conway work tirelessly during the discovery process to find out all the information we need to make the best possible case against all the responsible parties.

Once the discovery process is over, our attorneys are prepared for trial. Many cases settle prior to going to trial, and we work hard to make sure each settlement represents fair value to our injured clients.



## 4. The Trial

If the case is not able to settle prior to trial, the case will be presented to a jury, who will decide whether the defendant is responsible for our client's injuries and what the fair compensation for the client is. Our primary trial goal is to ensure that we put the best case possible in front of a jury, and our trial attorneys have a long track record of excellent results. We don't back down from any defendant, and will take any case to verdict if we can't come to a just resolution prior to trial.

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