



Mesothelioma FAQs

Answers to frequently
asked questions about
mesothelioma.

Q:
A:

How could I have been exposed to asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral classified as a known human carcinogen. Asbestos is commonly understood to cause mesothelioma, but it can also result in lung cancer, asbestosis, and other cancers. Most people are not diagnosed with an asbestos-related disease until decades after the exposure.

- Cement
- Pipe Insulation
- Paper and Millboard
- Boiler Insulation Materials
- Firebrick
- Refractory Brick
- Brake Linings/Pads for Cars and Trucks
- Ceiling Tiles
- Electric Wiring and Insulation
- Heat-resistant Fabrics
- Flooring Tiles
- Insulation in Walls and Attics
- Roofing Shingles
- Siding on Houses and Commercial Structures
- Spray-on Fireproofing
- Vinyl Tiles for Flooring
- Wall Panels and Attic Insulation
- Drywall and Joint Compound
- Acoustical Plaster
- Hot Top Linings

Products were used in a variety of settings, including

- Steel Mills
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Oil Refineries
- Power Generating Stations
- Railroads
- Chemical Processing Plants
- Skyscrapers
- Auto Shops
- Homes
- and More

Asbestos also contaminated many talcum powder and cosmetic products unbeknownst to consumers who regularly used them at home on their children when doing diaper changes and as an after-bath and cosmetic or hygiene product.

Q:

A:

Can you get mesothelioma without asbestos exposure?

Studies show that approximately 70% to 80% of individuals diagnosed with mesothelioma have had a significant history of exposure to asbestos. While asbestos exposure does not account for 100% of cases, it is considered the primary cause of mesothelioma. Some cases have been attributed to exposure to a volcanic material called erionite, which is found in rock formations. This material can cause mesothelioma when it is disturbed and becomes airborne.

It's also fairly common for spouses and children of individuals who have been exposed to asbestos to develop mesothelioma even if they have not been directly exposed themselves. It's assumed that this may be a result of fibers coming home on a worker's clothing, creating second-hand asbestos exposure.

There are also a small number of cases that are not attributed to either asbestos or erionite exposure. These are known as "idiopathic" or "spontaneous" cases of mesothelioma.

Q:

A:

What are the symptoms of mesothelioma?

The symptoms of mesothelioma vary depending on the type you're dealing with. Common symptoms of pleural mesothelioma, which develops in the chest, include:

- Pain in the lower back or the side of the chest
- Trouble swallowing or feeling like food is stuck in your throat
- Shortness of breath
- Hoarseness
- Chronic cough
- Swelling of the face and arms

Pericardial mesothelioma, which develops in the lining of the heart, is often characterized by symptoms including:

- Chest Pain
- Heart Murmur
- Irregular Heart Rythm
- Shortness of Breath

Peritoneal mesothelioma develops in the lining of the abdomen. Primary symptoms of this condition include:

- Abdominal Pain
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Constipation
- Fluid or Swelling in the Absomen

Other general symptoms that patients with mesothelioma may experience include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Blood Clots
- Loss of Appetite
- Unexplained Weight Loss
- Excessive Sweating

Unfortunately, many of the symptoms of mesothelioma are the same as those caused by less serious conditions. This often leads to delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis. Since it can take anywhere from 20 to 50 years or longer for symptoms of mesothelioma to develop after exposure to asbestos, it's important to let your medical professionals know about any potential past exposure. Doing so could be a matter of life and death.

Q:
A:

What is the prognosis for mesothelioma patients?

Mesothelioma is an aggressive form of cancer that can quickly spread to vital organs such as the heart, lungs, diaphragm, and intestines. It is generally considered a fatal disease. As with most cancers, the prognosis depends on a variety of factors including how quickly the disease is diagnosed and how aggressively it is treated. Other factors that may impact a patient's prognosis include:

- Type of mesothelioma – epithelial mesothelioma, which accounts for approximately 50% of cases, has a higher survival rate than biphasic and sarcomatoid mesothelioma.
- Location – pleural mesothelioma, which occurs in the lining of the lungs, accounts for about 75% of all cases and has the best survival rates. Peritoneal mesothelioma, which occurs in the lining of the abdomen, is typically harder to treat and may have a less positive prognosis. Testicular and pericardial mesothelioma are the most difficult to treat and have the lowest survival rates.
- Stage of the disease – mesothelioma is often misdiagnosed or diagnosis is delayed until the later stages of the disease. The later a diagnosis occurs, the less positive the prognosis may be.
- Metastasis – after a mesothelioma diagnosis, it's fairly common for oncologists to find that cancer has metastasized (spread) beyond the initial tumor. The extent of the metastasis and where it has spread can impact the patient's prognosis.
- Patient health – the younger and stronger a patient is when the diagnosis occurs, the better chance they may have of fighting the disease and dealing with the associated symptoms. Patients with certain conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or diabetes may face additional challenges during chemotherapy, radiation, and other treatments. Non-smokers also typically have a better prognosis than smokers.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for mesothelioma, even if it's caught and treated early. Some patients can reduce the negative impact of their symptoms and improve their quality of life using a combination of traditional medicine and alternative treatment options.

Q:

How long can a mesothelioma patient live?

A:

While every case is different, the average survival time for an individual diagnosed with mesothelioma is around four to 18 months after diagnosis. However, medical advancements in recent years have improved the outlook for many patients.

Some patients have lived for 10 years or longer after diagnosis, but, unfortunately, this is not the norm. The current five-year survival rate for mesothelioma patients is just 10%. Individuals who are diagnosed early and are generally in good health may have a more favorable prognosis when compared to others who are not diagnosed until they are in the late stages of the disease.

Q:

What is the difference between mesothelioma and lung cancer?

A:

While mesothelioma and lung cancer are similar, mesothelioma typically develops in the lining of the lungs while lung cancer starts inside the actual lungs. Lung cancer can be caused by a variety of factors including tobacco use, exposure to secondhand smoke, and exposure to harmful chemicals, including asbestos. Mesothelioma is primarily caused by inhaling asbestos.

Q:

How common is malignant mesothelioma?

A:

Currently, there are approximately 3,000 new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in the U.S. each year, making it a fairly rare disease. The number of reported cases increased significantly from the 1970s through the early 1990s. Since then, the number of diagnosed cases has leveled off and has decreased slightly among men. This is possibly due to changes in workplace conditions that have been put in place to limit asbestor exposure.

Q:

A:

What is peritoneal mesothelioma?

Peritoneal mesothelioma is a tumor formed on the lining of the abdomen or the peritoneum. Around 30% of all mesothelioma diagnoses are peritoneal mesothelioma. This cancer is caused by the inhalation and ingestion of asbestos fibers. While symptoms and treatment options will vary from person to person depending on a multitude of factors (age, location, and size of the tumor, other health concerns) peritoneal mesothelioma remains an aggressive and deadly form of cancer. Misdiagnosis of peritoneal mesothelioma is common, so it is important to mention asbestos exposure to your doctor even if it occurred decades ago.

Early symptoms of peritoneal mesothelioma include unexplained weight loss, continuous fluid build up in and around the lungs (pleural effusion), abdominal pain and swelling, visible abscess protruding from the abdomen, and shortness of breath. Many people diagnosed with peritoneal mesothelioma are given less than a year to live. If the disease is diagnosed at an early stage, surgery may be an option that adds years to a prognosis. Chemotherapy and radiation are the most common form of treatment, and other treatments exist to relieve pain and suffering. For example, if there is a build-up of fluid, known as a pleural effusion, paracentesis may be performed to drain the excess fluid. While no cure for mesothelioma exists, doctors and researchers around the country are working to prolong the life of those diagnosed. It's recommended to stay up to date on treatment options and clinical trials and discuss them during regular checkups with your doctor.

Q:

A:

What treatment options are available for those diagnosed with mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma treatment decisions depend on the overall health of the patient and specific aspects of cancer, such as stage, location of the disease, and patient's personal treatment goals. Some patients may want to use the most aggressive methods available to treat cancer, even if those methods

come with unpleasant side effects. Others focus on treatment options that prioritize comfort and living as symptom-free and pain-free as possible.

Different types of mesothelioma treatment plans include:

- **Curative Treatment:** If the cancer is diagnosed early enough, doctors may use curative treatments to remove mesothelioma from a patient's body with surgery, chemotherapy, or a combination of both.
- **Palliative Treatment:** The goal is to alleviate pain and discomfort caused by the symptoms of mesothelioma.
- **Multimodal Treatment:** Often the best course of action to attack mesothelioma is to combine two or more treatments, typically surgery, chemotherapy, and/or radiation therapy.

After someone is diagnosed with mesothelioma, an oncologist can help determine the specific course of action by considering all aspects of the disease's progress and the patient's wishes.

Q:

How much do your legal services cost?

A:

Our office does not charge you anything unless you recover money for your case. We take the financial risk for your claim or lawsuit and pay money upfront to cover costs and fees associated with filing and litigating cases. These costs are only reimbursed if you recover. Our office operates on a contingency fee basis, meaning we take a percentage of the total recovery from settlements or verdicts.

Q:

Am I able to bring a claim or file a lawsuit?

A:

Every case is different, and our team of experienced litigators will fully evaluate your case based on the circumstances and facts you provide. We'll want to know and understand what happened to cause your injury, details on any treatment you've received if you've missed work, and will ask a host of other questions that will help us understand you and your case. We're also able to order records and other supporting information if you do not

have it. After you speak with our office directly, we will fully evaluate your case, explain options, and lay out the best course of action for you. You can call us at 800-322-5573 or fill out the free case evaluation form at the bottom of this page to get started.

Q:

Is there a time limit within which I must bring my claim or file a lawsuit?

A:

Yes, there is a time limit to file a claim or lawsuit, which is known as the statute of limitations. Statutes of limitations vary by state, and in some states, vary by the type of civil case being brought. For example, in Illinois, the statute of limitations for a personal injury case or wrongful death case is two years from the date of discovery of the injury. Time is of the essence when filing a lawsuit, so you should not delay in contacting an attorney to fully consider and evaluate your options. Our qualified team is standing by to assist you.

Many victims of asbestos exposure who are diagnosed with mesothelioma are faced with a multitude of questions. Cooney & Conway, LLP. has compiled a list of useful web resources regarding asbestos, exposure, and mesothelioma. For more information, call 800-322-5573 toll-free to speak with a knowledgeable representative. Or, simply fill out the Case Evaluation contact information form, and we will promptly respond to your inquiry.

National Cancer Institute FAQ on Asbestos Exposure

This page from the U.S. National Cancer Institute's Web site answers questions about the cancer risk of asbestos exposure. It provides background on what asbestos is, how it is used, where it can be found, and why the material is hazardous. Visitors can see what symptoms of mesothelioma to look out for, and how to better protect themselves from the dangers of asbestos.

Information Center for Malignant Mesothelioma

Another valuable resource from the National Cancer Institute's site, this page provides information on mesothelioma treatment, research, statistics, and much more. Download the NCI PDF on Mesothelioma [here](#).

American Cancer Society on Asbestos and its Dangers

From the organization's Learn About Cancer center, this page explains the different types of diseases that can be caused by asbestos exposure -- and what animal studies and the research of mesothelioma experts and others have shown. It also provides tips on how to prevent exposure to asbestos.

Asbestos Information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

This site details the most common sources of asbestos explains what to do if you find asbestos in your home, and provides links to EPA publications on asbestos. It also steers visitors to agency regulations and relevant laws on asbestos materials, use, and safety.

Mayo Clinic: Mesothelioma

The famed Mayo Clinic weighs in on mesothelioma causes, symptoms, and treatment. Detailed are the various medical options for mesothelioma patients, as well as information on testing, diagnosis, coping, and support. Alternative treatments like acupuncture and breath training -- which won't fight the disease but can reduce symptoms -- are also discussed.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

An online information center on asbestos exposure and its impact on health, this site offers advice on how to lessen the discomfort that mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other asbestos-related diseases can cause. Links help visitors find medical professionals who specialize in mesothelioma and other conditions caused by asbestos.

OSHA on Asbestos

This Web page from the U.S. government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration steers users to the official OSHA standards, rules, and directives related to asbestos. Many links can be found here, to resources that include information on asbestos hazards, safety recommendations and guidelines, and asbestos statistics.



Interested In talking to someone in our office?

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