

Health Bulletin



Effects Of Asbestos Exposure, Years Afterward

(NAPSA)—A substance originally seen as a “miracle” fireproofing and insulation material is today known as a cancer-causing hazard, and thousands of people each year are succumbing to the effects of exposure—even if that exposure occurred decades ago.

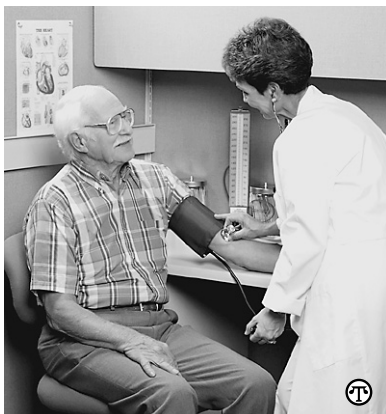
One of the more common maladies associated with asbestos exposure is mesothelioma. This term is used to describe a cancerous tumor that involves the mesothelial cells of an organ. The mesothelial cells form a protective lining over the lungs, heart and abdominal organs.

Virtually all cases of mesothelioma are related to inhaling of asbestos fibers. There are about 3,000 cases per year (mostly men over the age of 40) and there will be about 300,000 cases before 2030. Life expectancy is typically 24 months after diagnosis, but it depends on what stage the cancer is detected, the health of the patient and other factors. However, mesothelioma has a latency period after exposure that could last 15 to 50 years.

“This means that someone who worked in a factory with asbestos 40 years ago could be developing mesothelioma now,” explains Jere Beasley, a lawyer who works with people who have been exposed to asbestos.

Identifying the risk

In the 1930s, major medical journals began featuring articles that linked asbestos to cancer. In 1935, the *American Journal of Cancer* published “Pulmonary Asbestosis: Carcinoma of the Lung in Asbesto-Silicosis.” In the following decades, several major findings appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *Lancet*.



Many men may be at risk for cancer related to asbestos exposure from decades ago.

Despite the scientific evidence, companies continued to use asbestos as a building material and in all parts of manufacturing. Many materials, such as fiberglass insulation, were developed to replace asbestos, but a number of companies that used asbestos ignored the safer—and often more expensive—alternatives.

Mesothelioma today

The onset of mesothelioma is usually very slow. The first symptom is a constant pain in the chest. This pain is later accompanied by difficulty breathing due to an accumulation of fluid in the chest. Other symptoms include coughing, fever and weight loss.

“If you, or a member of your family, have these symptoms, you can go to our Web site and see if your occupation is one we list as having involved asbestos exposure,” says Beasley.

For more information about mesothelioma and asbestos exposure, call (800) 898-2034 or visit the Web site at www.difficultybreathing.com.