

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the name given to a group of six different fibrous minerals occurring naturally in our environment—amosite, chrysotile, crocidolite, and the fibrous varieties of tremolite, actinolite, and anthophyllite.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which had low treatment and refinement costs. Its unique properties of fire resistance, tensile strength, sound absorption, low electrical conductivity and chemical resistance made it a cheap and simple way to solve many material design problems relating to housing.

How does asbestos affect my health?

The main asbestos-related diseases are mesothelioma, asbestosis, pleural disease and cancer of the lung, larynx, and ovary. In addition, positive associations have been observed between exposure to all forms of asbestos and cancer of the pharynx, stomach, and colorectum. These diseases develop after a person inhales or ingests asbestos fibres. These diseases have the potential to cause significant health problems and even death.

Asbestos can pose a health risk when airborne fibres are generated either through degradation or high energy mechanical action—

for example, drilling or sanding. The degree of asbestos fibre release, and inhalation or ingestion exposure, is partly dependent upon the type of material binding the asbestos, its general condition and the product type.

Friable asbestos poses a significant threat to human health. This type of asbestos material is usually soft and easily crumbles into a fine material or dust. Some examples include insulation or pipe lagging which easily become airborne, affecting the health of people working and living nearby. All asbestos should be treated as potentially life threatening.



Appropriate removal of asbestos

If you're planning home renovations that will include removing or disturbing asbestos it is important that you engage a qualified asbestos removalist.

Asbestos removal courses are available in the various states and territories. These courses will provide additional information about safe work practices and disposal methods in your state or territory. For up to date information check with your local health and safety authority.

Frequently asked questions

How do I tell if it is asbestos?

The only definitive way to tell if it is asbestos is through sample analysis under microscopic examination. Fibrous cement sheeting made in the early 1980s with asbestos is visually identical to that made in the mid 1980s without asbestos. Vinyl tiles and sealants often require further testing using x-ray diffraction or scanning electron microscopy to confirm asbestos content.

Does asbestos have to be removed?

When you are planning renovations removal of asbestos containing materials by an appropriately licenced and trained company is recommended. If the building was constructed pre 1984 it will have asbestos in it. If it was constructed 1984—1990 there is still a chance of asbestos, particularly various forms of pipe and formwork.

Do I need to have my house inspected before I start renovating?

Before renovating or planning to renovate you should have your house inspected for asbestos.

MIGHTY HELPFUL
MITRE 10

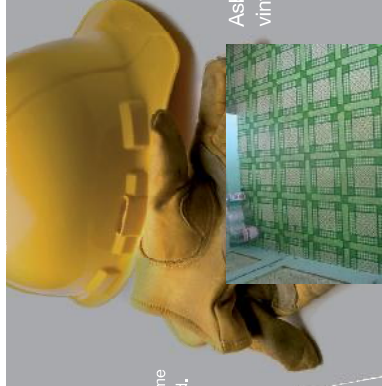
MITRE 10
TradeCentre

Where is asbestos in my home?

If your house was built before the 1990s it is likely to contain some form of asbestos material or product unless it has been removed.

The following photos are examples of what asbestos in your home may look like. These images only show some of the key areas in your home where you may find different types of asbestos. Asbestos was used all around the home for a variety of purposes—not all are covered in this brochure.

Not all forms of asbestos need to be removed but when you are planning renovations it is important that you consult an appropriately qualified professional.



Asbestos backed vinyl in a kitchen.



Asbestos cement sheet eaves lining.



Removal of tiles next to the dishwasher has revealed asbestos cement wall lining.



Simulated brick asbestos cement sheet cladding – moulded slices of brick attached to asbestos cement sheeting.



Laminated asbestos cement sheet splash back panel to a sink.



Asbestos cement sheet walls in a toilet.



Very poor surfaces of corrugated asbestos cement roof with asbestos debris loose on the roof and in the gutter.



Asbestos woven rope still on a section of hot water pipe leading to a new hot water service unit.



Old Garage: with asbestos cement walls and roof.

