

# factsheet

Housing and Health

## **ASBESTOS IN THE HOME**

### **What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is a natural silicate mineral consisting of fibres. The fibres are strong, durable, and resistant to heat, long, thin and flexible. There are three types of asbestos, white (the most common), blue and brown. Each type poses a different level of risk. Asbestos products are very good for thermal insulation, were widely used from the 1930's to the 1970s. They are now banned in the UK

### **What is the problem?**

When asbestos materials crumble through age or damage they release the fibres into the air. The fibres can settle deep in the lungs. White asbestos can sometimes be eliminated by the body but blue and brown asbestos can lead to asbestosis, mesothelioma or cancer. Disease may not appear for up to 40 years and since there is no known safe level of exposure, all exposure to asbestos should be avoided.

As a home-owner, the presence of asbestos is not necessarily a problem. It is people who have been in the business of manufacturing, installing or removing it who are most likely to be affected. If the asbestos containing materials are intact or in a place where they are unlikely to be disturbed, removal is not always the

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best option. It may be better to seal it, for instance by painting over. However, you should make a record so that you and future owners or occupiers know that there is asbestos present. If you do decide it should be removed, you should employ a licensed asbestos removal company. Addresses may be found in Yellow Pages or on the web.

### **Asbestos materials in the home**

**Insulating board** (*asbestos content 20-45%*) - was used for fire protection, and insulation. Common in 1960s & 70s system-built housing, found in ducts, infill panels, ceiling tiles, wall lining, bath panels and partitions. Unlikely in buildings after 1982.

**Lagging** (*asbestos content 55-100%*) - widely used for thermal insulation of pipes and boilers in public buildings and system-built flats during the 60s to early 70s. Banned in 1986.

**Sprayed coating** (*asbestos content up to 85%*)- used for fire protection of structural steel, commonly in service ducts, lift shafts, etc of system-built flats in the 60s. Stopped in 1974, banned in 1986. Often now removed or sealed.

**Asbestos-cement** (*asbestos content 10-15%, sometimes 40%*) Most widely used asbestos material. Found as corrugated roofing sheets, wall-cladding, partition boards, wall and ceiling linings, bath panels, soffit boards, fire surrounds, flue pipes, cold water tanks and roofing tiles. Commonly used for garages, sheds, guttering and drain pipes. Use declined since 1976 and banned since 1999. Unlikely to release fibres unless they are damaged by abrasion or weathering.

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**Other buildings materials and products** - Asbestos has been used in wall plugging, textured paints and plasters. Banned in 1988. Floor tiles, cushion flooring, roofing felts, tapes, ropes, felts and blankets can also contain asbestos.

**Heating appliances and domestic equipment** - Asbestos used in some warm air heating systems, storage heaters, flameless catalytic gas heaters also in early 'coal effect' gas fires. Asbestos used in oven gloves, ironing boards, seals on cooker doors and fire blankets. Banned in 1993. Asbestos also used in brake linings and pads.

**Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos**

**How can I identify asbestos?**

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos as modern asbestos free insulating materials often look similar. Asbestos containing products were labelled after 1976 and since 1986 all products containing asbestos have been labelled. However, if there is no label the material should be sampled by a specialist company.

**And if there is asbestos in my home?**

Asbestos materials in good condition that cannot readily be damaged are often best left untouched where they are. Removal can lead to release of fibres into the air.

Materials that are slightly damaged can be repaired by sealing or painting over. Do not sand or rub down the material before painting!

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Asbestos materials that are badly damaged or deteriorating can release fibres and should be removed by a licensed asbestos removal company. However, fire protection materials should be replaced with asbestos free materials. Do not keep using oven gloves or other small items containing asbestos - dispose of them. If you think that your warm air heating system, electric storage heater or flameless catalytic gas heater may contain asbestos contact a specialist asbestos survey company. Take care when doing DIY.

### **Safe disposal of asbestos**

Do not put asbestos waste in the dustbin.

There are public amenity sites that will accept asbestos waste. You will need a permit for this. Contact Leicestershire County Council Waste Disposal Section on 0116 305 0001 who will tell you what to do.

### **D.I.Y.**

- Do not work on any sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards. This must be done
- By a licensed asbestos removal contractor.
- Do not scrape or sand asbestos cement sheets before painting.
- Keep other people away from the work.
- Wear protective clothing, disposable overalls, and a disposable dust mask, 'CE' marked to EN 149 with FFP2 particulate filters.
- Do not use a domestic vacuum cleaner to clean up. Hire an industrial vacuum cleaner that conforms to BS 5415 (Type H).
- Wash non-disposable clothing straight away, separately from



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other clothing.

### **Dismantling a shed or garage**

- If you take proper precautions you can safely repair or dismantle a garage or shed made of corrugated asbestos cement sheets.
- Asbestos cement sheets are very fragile. Take care not to fall through the roof.
- Keep the sheets wet to avoid dust.
- Do not drill, cut, break or disturb the sheets unless absolutely necessary.
- Use hand tools rather than power tools.
- Do not bury the sheets. Dampen them down, double wrap them carefully in polythene and dispose of them properly.

### **Sealing asbestos**

- Asbestos cement is alkaline.
- Clean any dust off with a damp cloth. Wrap the cloth in a polythene bag and dispose of it properly.
- Use 1 coat of dilute PVA with a topcoat of gloss or use 2 coats of alkali resistant paint.
- Do not use power tools that could raise dust from the surface of the asbestos.

### **Remember where the asbestos is**

You should make a note of where the materials are so that you, a future occupier or builder, will know there is asbestos present.

**Asbestos is dangerous when the fibres in the air are breathed in.**

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If you are in doubt, contact a licensed specialist asbestos sampling or removal company. See Yellow Pages under Asbestos Removal.

Dispose of Asbestos properly.

Call Leicestershire County Council on 0116 305 0001 on how to do so.

- Avoid creating asbestos dust.
- Avoid breathing asbestos dust.
- Asbestos material in good condition should be left alone.

If you require more information please contact:

Environmental Protection, Directorate of Strategic Housing and Health, Southfield Road, Loughborough LE11 2TX

Tel: 01509 634636 Fax: 01509 232313

Email: [env.health@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@charnwood.gov.uk)

We have more information about asbestos on our website at:-

[www.charnwood.gov.uk/environment/asbestosintheenvironment.html](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/environment/asbestosintheenvironment.html)

This information is available in different formats. To access these please phone (01509) 634560.

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這資料具不同的格式，請致電 (01509) 634560 索取。

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**If you require more information please contact:**  
Insert Department, address, telephone & e-mail details

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આ માહિતી જુદી જુદી પદ્ધતિઓમાં ઉપલબ્ધ છે. તે મેળવવા માટે કૃપા કરી આ નંબર પર કોન કરો (01509) 634560.

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