

## Home Inspection Integral to Asbestos Safety

Many people believe asbestos exposure to be a hazard of the past. This is not necessarily true. However, simple precautions can prevent a harmful and potentially life-threatening exposure. While asbestos was banned in the late 1970's, few realize that it still exists in nearly 80% of structures built prior to 1978. This means that asbestos needs to be considered when conducting a home inspection or repair.

Part of the reason asbestos is still so widely found in buildings is because of how popular it was. Asbestos was used in a myriad of products from home insulation to ceiling and floor tiles. Asbestos fibers were extremely durable and resistant to heat transfer, making them ideal for many construction compounds.

Not all asbestos, however, is harmful. It is only the fibers become old or damaged that they become a true risk. When asbestos is hazardous it is said to be "friable." Friable asbestos fibers are generally those which can easily be crushed or pulverized by human hand pressure. For instance, asbestos was included in drywall compounds to promote wall insulation. As that drywall ages it becomes more brittle. The asbestos fibers within the brittle drywall compound are then released into the air supply, leaving those in the vicinity at risk of exposure.

If asbestos is suspected within a particular damaged or old home construction material, it is best to have the material inspected by a home inspection service or asbestos consulting firm. Companies require a special licensing to remove and dispose of asbestos and these inspectors can assist you in locating one.

Asbestos was banned in the 1970's because the nexus between exposure and related health complications became apparent. When microscopic asbestos fibers are inhaled, they become easily lodged in the lining of the body's internal organs, known as the mesothelium. Over time these fibers cause a chronic inflammation of the inner tissue, causing a harmful scarring to develop. These lesions can lead to a number of respiratory complications including [mesothelioma](#), a rare cancer caused by asbestos exposure, as well as asbestosis. One can prevent [mesothelioma](#) and other health complications through very simple precautions when dealing with asbestos. Generally speaking, asbestos is best dealt with by professionals who know the material and aware of proper disposal protocol.

Samantha Catalano, Public Outreach Coordinator

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