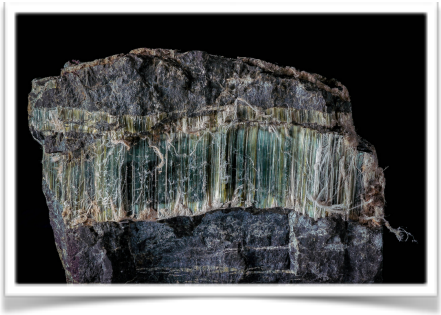
ASBESTOS DISEASES

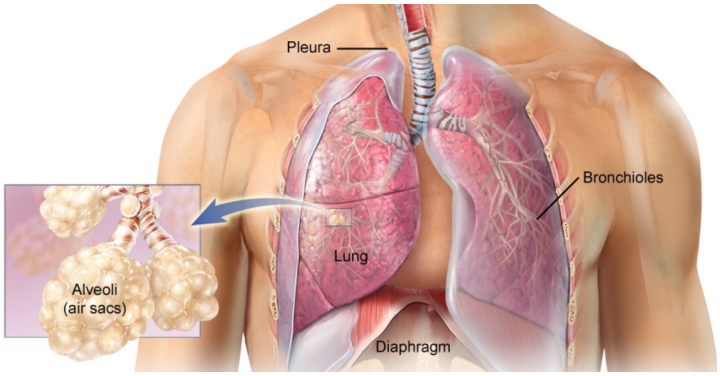


Asbestos

Asbestos is the name given to a group of six unusual minerals that appear as bands or veins in certain types of rock. The asbestos minerals exist as small and thin fibrous crystals. Larger fibers were once woven to form fireproof cloth and used to make gloves, theater curtains, welding blankets, and ironing board covers. Smaller fibers were used as a binder to strengthen insulation, plaster, fireproofing, cement pipe, floor tile, certain plastics, and brake linings. Prior to 1972, thousands of commercial and industrial products contained asbestos. The asbestos fiber or "dust" used in these products is small enough to be inhaled deep into the recesses of the lungs.

Exposure

Asbestos is always potentially hazardous, but it becomes a real danger when the small fibers are released into the air and a person is close enough to inhale



Asbestosis

The lung is comprised of about 700 million tiny air pockets called *alveoli*, where the oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange takes place with the bloodstream. The alveoli are clustered in small bunches, like grapes, and each bunch is connected to a system of branches like an enormous grape vine.

When asbestos dust is inhaled, the smallest fibers can enter the alveoli and become trapped. The fibers cause inflammation and the development of scar tissue - or fibrosis - within the alveoli. When this happens, the lungs will slowly lose their elasticity and develop what is known as a *restrictive* lung defect. Air can still enter the lungs, but the lungs can't expand and contract with the same ease, and the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide is reduced.

The diagnosis of "Asbestosis" has a technical definition in the medical and legal community and requires a certain degree of lung restriction, evidence of lung fibrosis or scarring on x-ray or CT scans, and a significant history of asbestos exposure. The severity of the asbestosis will vary from one person to the next, as will the degree of impairment.

Asbestosis is not a pre-cancerous condition. The scarring does not inevitably lead to cancer. Some people with asbestosis may

them. For example, in the case of asbestos-containing insulation, this can occur (1) during the original installation, (2) during repair or removal work, (3) during cleanup of such work, and (4) during the deterioration of the product while in use.

Delayed Injuries

All of the diseases caused by asbestos exposure take several decades to develop. Non-cancerous injuries may take 20 years to appear, and cancers can take 40 years to develop. This is referred to as the latency period for the disease.

Knowledge of Hazards

Asbestos has been recognized as a dangerous material by the medical and scientific community for more than 100 years. The first reported lung injury from breathing asbestos dust appeared in the United Kingdom's "Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops" in 1898. Prior to the formation of the EPA and OSHA in the early 1970's, there were no regulations prohibiting its use.

Understanding Asbestos

John C. Heubeck, Esq. has litigated hundreds of asbestos injury cases over the past 30 years. Most lawyers handling asbestos cases have far less experience in prosecuting difficult or problematic cases.

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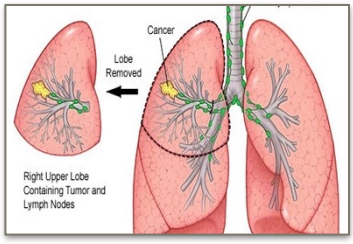
also develop cancer from the same asbestos exposure, but one diagnosis does not require the other.

Lung Changes Caused by Asbestos

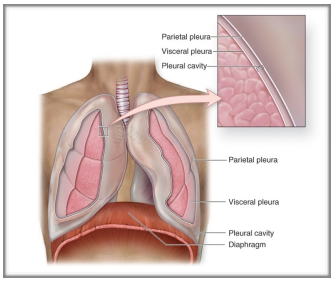
When asbestos fibers are inhaled over a period of years, several non-cancerous changes can occur in an around the lungs. Collagen deposits or patches can form on the outside of the lung, known as *pleural plaques*. Over time, as they become calcified, they will become visible on chest x-rays and CT-Scans. A similar process can cause *pleural thickening*, where portions of the lining of the lungs becomes thicker. The changes don't usually cause any impairment, but they are reliable evidence of a significant past exposure to asbestos.

Lung Cancer



Asbestos is a *genotoxin*, meaning it can damage the DNA in cells in which it comes into contact. This damage may result in the development of a malignant tumor in the lung itself. The risk of lung cancer from asbestos exposure is particularly concerning among people who also smoked cigarettes.

Cancer of the Pleura



In rare instances, exposure to asbestos may also cause a tumor to develop in the outside lining of the lung, or pleura. The cancer arises in the mesothelial cells that form the pleura, and is thus referred to as *pleural mesothelioma*.

Other Cancers Caused by Asbestos

Several other cancers, including cancer of the larynx and ovary, and mesotheliomas that form in the abdomen (*peritoneal mesothelioma*) or around the heart (*pericardial mesothelioma*) or testes (*testicular mesothelioma*) can be caused by prior exposure to asbestos.