

Mesothelioma and Asbestos Illnesses

Mesothelioma and other asbestos-related illnesses have a very long latency period. Therefore, it may be 15-50 years or more after the first exposure before asbestos disease is detected.

Because the asbestos industry hid its knowledge about the dangers of asbestos, and because many workers were never told that they were working in a dangerous asbestos-containing environment, millions of people were not only exposed themselves, but brought toxic asbestos into their homes, unknowingly exposing their families, too.

Spouses and children of asbestos-exposed workers continue to be diagnosed with mesothelioma and other asbestos-related illnesses because of this second-hand exposure, and they are as entitled to compensation as the workers who were exposed to asbestos in their workplace. We have filed, battled and won such claims from the early 1980's up to the present.

If you or a loved one have been exposed to asbestos and have experienced any of these symptoms or illnesses, you could be eligible to file a claim. Schedule a free consultation or phone a Wilentz asbestos attorney today.

Those at Risk of Exposure to Asbestos

Asbestos is found in thousands of commercial materials used for construction and building, transportation, foundries, and industry. The widespread use of asbestos has put hundreds of thousands of workers at risk of being exposed to it. These workers are likely to eventually suffer from asbestos-related diseases, and their family members are at risk of suffering from these diseases, too, due to household contact.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of trades that put workers at risk of exposure to asbestos:

- Insulators
- Sheetmetal workers
- Steamfitters
- Plumbers & pipefitters
- Masons & bricklayers
- Ironworkers
- Roofers
- Carpenters & joiners
- Boilermakers
- Tilersetters
- Shipfitters
- Electricians
- Operating Engineers
- Painters
- Plasterers
- Lathers
- Millwrights
- Laborers
- Machinists

- Auto and equipment mechanics (especially those servicing breaks and clutches)
- Plumbing maintenance workers
- HVAC heating maintenance workers

Asbestosis

Asbestosis is a chronic lung disease characterized by scarring of the lung tissue, caused by inhaling asbestos particles. Asbestosis may develop whether or not the victim also develops lung cancer or mesothelioma.

Symptoms of asbestosis typically do not show up for 10 to 40 years after initial exposure to asbestos. Its severity is usually related to the exposure dose. Symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- A persistent, dry cough
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Fingertips and toes appear wider and rounder than normal (clubbing)
- Chest tightness or pain

Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is an aggressive cancer of the lining around the lung caused by exposure to asbestos and products made or contaminated with asbestos. In the United States, doctors diagnose between 2,000 and 3,000 new cases of mesothelioma each year. If not diagnosed in its early stages, mesothelioma is often fatal within months of diagnosis and it has proven difficult to cure.

The most prevalent form of mesothelioma is pleural mesothelioma, which develops in the cell layer lining and surrounding the lungs. The two other forms of mesothelioma are found in the lining of the abdominal cavity (“peritoneal mesothelioma”) and in the lining of the heart (“pericardial mesothelioma”). The chance of developing mesothelioma is correlated with the amount of asbestos to which a person has been exposed and the duration of the exposure, although very limited exposures have been shown to trigger the disease.

Symptoms of mesothelioma often appear decades after exposure, adding to the difficulty of diagnosis. While a definitive diagnosis of mesothelioma requires a biopsy, the following are some of the prevalent symptoms that should be brought to the attention of a doctor:

Pleural Mesothelioma

- Chest pains
- Chronic coughing
- Fatigue
- Fever and night sweats
- A buildup of fluid around the lungs (“pleural effusion”)
- Weight loss

Peritoneal Mesothelioma

- Abdominal pain and swelling
- Unexpected or sudden weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- A buildup of fluid in the abdomen
- Anemia
- Bowel obstruction
- Fever

- Nausea

Pericardial Mesothelioma

- Chest pain
- Fluid buildup around the heart (“pericardial effusion”)
- An irregular heartbeat or palpitations (“arrhythmia”)
- Heart murmur
- Shortness of breath
- Fever and night sweats

Other Asbestos-related Cancers

Asbestos exposure can lead to all types of lung cancer, including adenocarcinoma, bronchoalveolar, small cell, large cell, oat cell and squamous cell.

As with all asbestos-related illnesses, lung cancer can go undetected anywhere from 10 to 30 years from the time the victim was first exposed.

A significant difference emerges when comparing lung cancer caused by cigarette smoking to lung cancer caused by asbestos. When an individual stops smoking cigarettes, their lung cancer risk immediately begins to decrease. However, if someone has been exposed to asbestos, their lung cancer risk remains high, because microscopic asbestos fibers can remain in the lungs for a lifetime.

Talc-related Asbestos Illnesses

Talc is a mineral that is often mined in close proximity to where asbestos is found. It is sometimes impossible to separate these two minerals, and therefore, the talc may be contaminated with asbestos.

Talc is most often used after being ground into a fine powder. This powder is light and hangs in the air, and it can be easily inhaled. Therefore, the use of asbestos-contaminated talc powder can lead to asbestos being inhaled, too.

Talc powder absorbs moisture, oils and odors, and has an astringent effect on human skin. It can also keep materials from sticking. These properties make it popular for both industrial uses (including in tires and industrial ceramics such as sanitary ware – toilets, basins, etc.) and for baby powders, foot powders and cosmetics.

People who contract asbestos-related illnesses, but who did not work in jobs traditionally associated with exposure to asbestos, may have been exposed to asbestos through talc. Both New York and New Jersey juries have recently awarded damages against cosmetic talc manufacturers to mesothelioma victims who were exposed to asbestos by using contaminated talc.

Even though, by 1972, the FDA’s testing revealed many popular cosmetic talc products were likely contaminated with asbestos, the manufacturers of these brands continued to sell them for decades longer.

How We Can Help

For a free case evaluation or if you have questions about the law or your illness, please phone our asbestos lawyers directly using the phone number found on this page. Or, if you prefer to complete our free case evaluation form, our client relations representative will contact you as soon as practicable.

To speak with an attorney about your legal options, please call: 732-423-1000.