

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral fiber. It is used in building construction for its strength, fire resistance, and insulation properties. Many asbestos products have been banned, and manufacturers have voluntarily limited use of asbestos in many products. However, asbestos can still be found in a variety of materials today.

ASBESTOS SAFETY TIPS:

- **Do** take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos material.
- **Don't** dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos.
- **Don't** saw, sand, scrape, or drill holes in asbestos materials.
- **Don't** use abrasive pads or brushes on power strippers to strip wax from asbestos flooring. Never use a power stripper on a dry floor.
- **Don't** sand or try to level asbestos flooring or its backing. When asbestos flooring needs replacing, install new floorcovering over it, if possible.
- **Do** limit access to areas with damaged materials that may contain asbestos.
- **Don't** track material that could contain asbestos through the house. If you cannot avoid walking through the area, have it cleaned with a wet mop. If the material is from a damaged area, or if a large area must be cleaned, call an asbestos professional.
- **Do** have removal and major repair done by people trained and qualified in handling asbestos. It is highly recommended that sampling and minor repair also be done by asbestos professionals.

Information Source: www.epa.gov/asbestos

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- **Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment**
705 N. Zeeb Rd.
P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645
(734) 222-3800
<http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org>
(Search for "Turning Trash to Treasure")
- **Michigan Department of Environmental Quality**
Environmental Assistance Center (EAC)
1-800-662-9278
- **Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth**
Occupational Safety & Health Administration
Construction Safety & Health Division
Asbestos Program
7150 Harris Drive
P.O. Box 30671
Lansing, Michigan 48909-8171
(517) 322-1320
asbestos@michigan.gov
www.dleg.state.mi.us/asbestos_program

ASBESTOS IN YOUR HOME



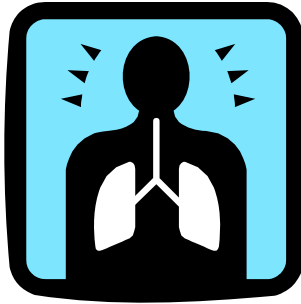
**WASHTENAW COUNTY
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How can asbestos affect my health?

Breathing high levels of asbestos fibers can cause lung cancer, mesothelioma (a cancer of the chest and abdominal linings), and asbestosis (irreversible lung scarring that can be fatal). People who get these diseases have usually been exposed to high levels of asbestos for a long time. Symptoms of asbestos-related diseases do not show up for many years.

We are all exposed to small amounts of asbestos in our daily lives, and most people do not develop asbestos-related health problems. However, disturbing asbestos material may release fibers into the air, which can be breathed into the lungs. These fibers can stay in the lungs for a long time, increasing the risk of disease. Smoking also increases the risk of asbestos-related diseases.



Where can I find asbestos?

- Roofing and siding shingles
- Insulation in houses built between 1930-1950
- Textured paint patching compounds used on wall and ceiling joints (banned in 1977)
- Soundproofing or decorative material sprayed on walls and ceilings
- Artificial ashes and embers in gas fireplaces
- Old stove-top pads and ironing board covers
- Walls and floors around woodburning stoves
- Vinyl floor tiles and the backing on vinyl sheet flooring and adhesives
- Asbestos blanket or tape on hot water and steam pipes or furnace ducts
- Oil and coal furnaces and door gaskets
- Automobile brake pads and linings, clutch facings, and gaskets

What should I do if I think I have asbestos in my home?

If you think asbestos may be in your home, the best thing is to do is to **LEAVE IT ALONE** if it appears to be in good condition. **There is no danger unless asbestos is disturbed, and fibers are released into the air and breathed into the lungs.** Don't touch the asbestos, but look for signs of wear or damage such as tears, scuffs, or water damage. You may release fibers if you disturb the asbestos by hitting, rubbing, or handling it, or if it is exposed to vibration or air flow.

Sometimes, the best way to deal with slightly damaged material is to limit access to the area and not touch or disturb it. In addition, you should double-bag and discard damaged or worn asbestos-containing items such as gloves, stove-top pads, or ironing board covers.

If asbestos material is more than slightly damaged, or if you are going to make changes in your home that might disturb it, you need to have it repaired or removed by a professional.

What about testing for asbestos?

You can't tell whether a material contains asbestos by looking at it, unless it is labeled. When in doubt, treat the material as if it contains asbestos or have it sampled and analyzed by a qualified professional. **Taking samples yourself is not recommended.** If not done correctly, sampling can be more hazardous than leaving the material alone. Only material that is damaged or will be disturbed should be sampled. You can find an asbestos sampling company in the phone book under "environmental services".

How do I take care of an asbestos problem in my home?

If the asbestos material is in good shape and will not be disturbed, leave it alone! If it may pose a danger, there are two types of corrections: repair and removal.

- **REPAIR** involves sealing or covering the material, keeping the asbestos in place. *Sealing* (encapsulation) means treating the material with a sealant that either binds the asbestos fibers together or coats the material so fibers are not released. Pipe, furnace, and boiler insulation can sometimes be repaired this way. *Covering* (enclosure) means placing something over or around the asbestos material to prevent release of fibers. Exposed insulated piping may be covered with a protective wrap or jacket.
- **REMOVAL** is the most expensive method and should be the last option. It may be required when making major changes to your home that will disturb asbestos material, or if asbestos material is severely damaged and cannot be repaired.



Asbestos testing, repair or removal should only be done by a professional trained to handle asbestos safely!