



Asbestos In Your Home

Also Known As The Silent Killer



Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral found in the surface of the earth. It contains strong fibres that have excellent durability, fire resistance and insulating

properties. Asbestos fibres are 50 to 200 times thinner than a human hair, it is invisible to the naked eye, can float in the air for long periods and can be breathed into the lungs.

In Australia asbestos was commonly used in the manufacture of many building materials used in the residential building industry between 1940s and the late 1980s before production was stopped.

The use of all forms of asbestos has been banned in Australia since December 31st 2003. However this ban does not apply to asbestos installed prior to this date (e.g. asbestos materials in homes)

What Are The Possible Health Effects Of Asbestos?

Asbestos can cause health problems if breathed into the lungs. Most fibres are removed from your lungs by your body's natural defences, however some fibres can remain in the lungs.

The possible health effects are;

- Asbestosis (progressive scarring of the lung tissue that impairs breathing)
- Lung Cancer
- Mesothelioma is a cancer of the linings around the lungs and abdomen.
- Non-cancerous diseases that effect the linings around the lungs and abdomen (commonly called "benign pleural diseases")

These diseases can sometimes take up to 50 years to develop. There may be treatments for asbestos related diseases but currently no cures.

Is It Dangerous?

Current scientific and medical evidence supports the fact that simply living or working in a building that contains asbestos is not dangerous so long as the materials containing asbestos is in good condition (i.e. undamaged, undisturbed)

If the asbestos material is in good condition leave it alone!

To minimise the chance of anyone being exposed to asbestos it is important to first understand if you even have it in your home and there are a few basic steps to follow.

1. Get an asbestos audit on your property by your local Independent Property Inspector. This will identify materials suspected of containing asbestos fibres and document its condition as undamaged and stable, or damaged and unstable.
2. Sample testing is the only way to confirm if asbestos fibres are present in the material. Testing will also identify a percentage margin in the sample and the type of asbestos
3. Only when you are armed with this information can you make any informed decision weather to leave it alone or remove it.
4. If you elect to remove it, you must check with the local laws in your state as the laws for safety procedures and removal may vary from state to state.
5. Do you know there are alternatives to removing the material containing asbestos (e.g. painting or sealing, covering with a non-asbestos material)?
6. If in any doubt, consult your local independent property inspector.

There are three main types of asbestos used in building materials. (The concentration varies greatly in different materials)

- Chrysotile or white asbestos
- Crocidolite or blue asbestos
- Amosite or brown asbestos



Examples Of Materials Suspected Of Containing Asbestos

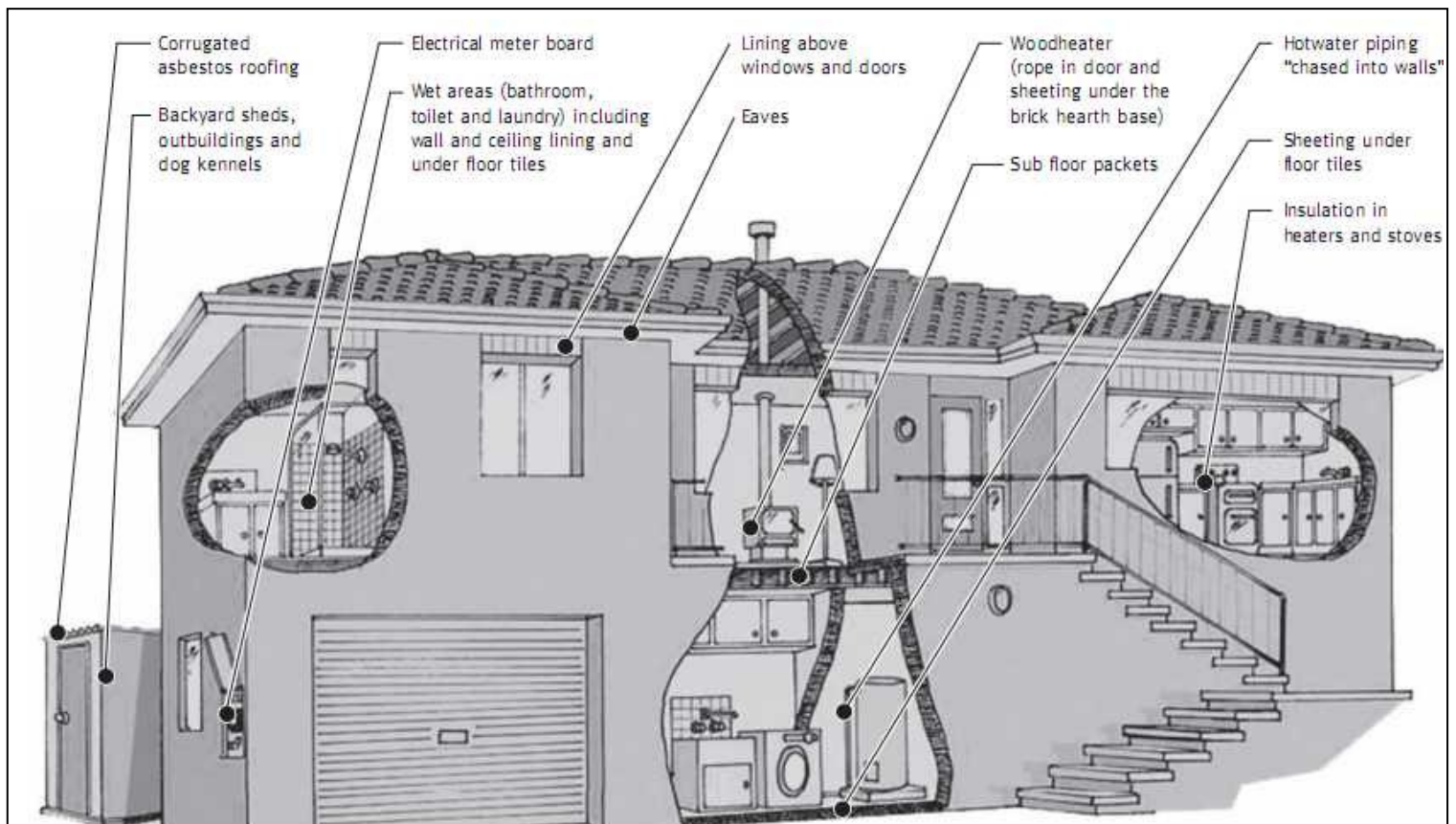
Cement sheet products, historically contained about 15% asbestos fibres. This is not an exhaustive list but intended as a guide only.

- Flat or corrugated wall and roof sheeting (“fibro”)
- Roof shingles
- Flexible building boards (e.g. Villaboard, Hardiflex, Wundaboard, Flexiboard)
- Floor sheeting
- Vinyl floor tiles and sheeting
- Asbestos-backed vinyl and millboard underlay
- Water, drainage and flue pipes
- Backing for imitation brickboard cladding
- Backing panels in switchboards or meter boards
- Some Mastics and bitumen
- Heat shields around wall ovens

- Some wall and ceiling insulation products.
- Sprayed insulation for acoustic walls and ceiling
- Tilux sheeting in place of ceramic tiles in bathrooms.
- Broken cement sheeting was commonly used as a packing material under bearers and joists
- Heat blocks in electric heat banks
- Asbestos felt type underlays
- Heat resistant laminates (e.g. Formica)
- Asbestos gaskets and rope in wood heater and oven doors also pipe lagging

Identifying materials suspected of containing asbestos is a specialised field and takes considerable experience, education and training. If you are in any doubt at all please call us before you touch it.

We recommend you contact your local Independent Property Inspector by calling **1800 17 88 22** so you can be sure it is not slowly killing you and your family.



Common locations of materials containing asbestos in a house.