

Asbestos

October 2011

Asbestos is a natural mineral that was used as a building material during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Due to its heat resistant properties it was particularly useful as a means of providing fire protection, both in sheet form and as a sprayed coating when combined with cement. It made a useful weather resistant material which was easily moulded into sheets, pipes, gutters etc.

There are three types of Asbestos:

1. White Asbestos (chrysotile) – used most commonly in domestic appliances and buildings
2. Brown Asbestos (amosite) – used most commonly in thermal insulation, sprayed applications and insulation boards
3. Blue Asbestos (crocidolite) – used most commonly for insulation laggings and sprayed coatings.

You cannot determine Asbestos by its colour as it is often incorporated with other materials. To be certain that a material contains Asbestos, it should be analysed by a laboratory.

When is Asbestos a problem?

When Asbestos-containing materials are damaged or deteriorate with age they can release fibres into the air. The shape and size of Asbestos fibres enables them to penetrate deep into the lungs, where they can stay for a long time. Blue and brown Asbestos are thought to be the most dangerous forms.

What are the health risks associated with Asbestos?

The risk associated with the use of Asbestos are concentrated around the respiratory system as the greatest risk comes from the inhalation of its fibres.

There are three main health conditions associated with Asbestos fibre inhalation:

Asbestosis	this is the permanent scarring of lung tissue and is usually associated with frequent exposure to high levels of Asbestos dust over a period of up to 10 years
Lung Cancer	Some people who get Asbestosis may also develop lung cancer, but there are other factors which will also increase this risk, such as smoking
Mesothelioma	This is a type of cancer that is most commonly the result of exposure to blue Asbestos, and takes 15 to 60 years to develop to a point where diagnosis is possible

Where is Asbestos found?

Asbestos can be found in many forms and in many places. Below are some common examples:

- Roof and wall claddings
- Textured paints
- Flat roof decking tiles
- Flue pipes/gutters/rainwater downpipes/airbricks
- Roof slates, linings, tiles and felts
- Pipe lagging
- Thermoplastics and vinyl floor tiles
- Storage and catalytic heaters
- Internal partitions, wall boards, airing cupboard linings, shelving and ducts

What if I find Asbestos in the home?

If you suspect that you have Asbestos in your home then you may need to have it assessed as to whether or not it is asbestos and to see what condition it is in.

If it is intact, in good condition and not damaged or likely to be disturbed, then it is best left alone. Do not drill, saw, scrub it or disturb it in any way. Check it on a regular basis for signs of damage.

If it is damaged and to be disturbed, then it is best to have it removed.

How do I dispose of Asbestos?

If dealing with large or difficult to remove quantities of Asbestos, it is best to employ the services of a contractor as they will have the expertise and the equipment to carry out large scale and difficult jobs. This is particularly important for the removal of large quantities of Asbestos as this requires additional measures to control the risk.

There are measures you can put in place to minimise exposure and reduce risk if you are disposing small quantities of Asbestos safely. Further information on the removal of Asbestos products can be found on the [HSE website](#).

Where can I dispose of Asbestos?

The Household Waste Recycling Centres at Weston-super-Mare, Portishead and Backwell will accept two sheets of Cement Bonded Asbestos per visit or per week, whichever is less. This must be double wrapped in thick polythene sheeting and fully sealed with strong tape, or in thick plastic sacks in small pieces.

All other Asbestos waste should be disposed of by an Environment Agency registered waste carrier. You can contact the Environment Agency on 08708 506506 for an instant waste carrier validation check.

Contacts List

Asbestos in Private Houses

Environmental Protection 01275 884 882

Asbestos in the Workplace

This includes; construction/maintenance industries and factories and manufacturing

Health & safety Executive 0117 988 6000