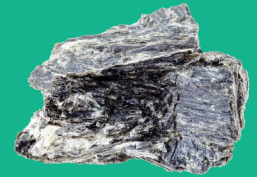


Asbestos

What Is It?

Asbestos is the term used to describe 6 types of fibrous minerals found naturally in rock. These six types have been divided into two categories:

Amphibole – contains long, chain-like fibers that are easily inhaled and stay in the lungs for a long period of time.



Serpentine – composed of layered, curled fibers. Considered less harmful and less damaging to the lungs



- 99% of commercial asbestos is the less toxic serpentine, and only 1 % is amphibole

The Uses of Asbestos



Asbestos fibers are flexible, strong, resistant to chemicals, and poor conductors of heat and electricity. This makes them useful in insulation, building and roofing materials, and automobile brake pads.



Vermiculite is a mineral commonly used in the production of insulation, construction and agricultural products, and may be contaminated with small quantities of amphibole asbestos.



Insulation composed of vermiculite contaminated with asbestos was shipped from a mine in Libby, Montana that operated from 1920–1990 to numerous countries, including Canada, and is likely in millions of homes worldwide.

Risks of Asbestos



Asbestos poses a very small risk in homes built after the 1990s and in older homes that are well-maintained.



If asbestos-containing materials degrade or are disrupted through renovation, fibers may be released into the air, creating a greater risk of inhalation and possible health effects

Health Effects From Asbestos Exposure

- The impact of asbestos on health depends on the amount and type of asbestos fibers in the air.



Health effects primarily following exposures from work



Asbestos exposure has not been linked with causing or worsening asthma.

Asbestosis - a serious condition in workers, causes pleural disease and lung damage. Others not affected right away may be at risk for developing lung cancer, mesothelioma, and other forms of cancers.



Children may be at higher risk of asbestos-related illness due to greater intake of contaminated soil or dust while playing, and increased opportunity for effects later in life



Until recently, Canada was one of the world's leading producers of asbestos. The last mines were shut down in 2011. While older properties may still contain asbestos, its use has declined greatly. Health Canada offers guidelines for managing asbestos present in homes and schools.

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