

So what is Mesothelioma? Mesothelioma is a rare type of cancer that affects the mesothelium – the thin, protective membrane that covers the lungs, heart and other internal body organs. The disease is most commonly caused by exposure to asbestos fibers.

The mesothelial cells form the membrane that contains our heart, abdomen, lungs and reproductive organs. This layer acts like a sac that holds our organs and provides a cushion. These cells also provide lubrication so the organs are protected from friction. Exposure to asbestos puts you at risk of damaging these crucial mesothelial cells.

Asbestos is a mineral that has a long, thin, strong, needle like structure. The most common application of asbestos was for insulation and fire resistance. Asbestos was widely used in building construction up until the 1980's. Many homes, ships, office buildings and even schools contained asbestos. Concerned about asbestos in your home? Visit asbestos.com for more information.

The military used asbestos frequently in ships and shipyards. Engine rooms, boiler rooms, steam and pipe fittings all contained large amounts of asbestos to help insulate in order to withstand heat. Nearly thirty percent of mesothelioma patients are [veterans](#).

If someone is exposed to asbestos they are put at risk for developing mesothelioma. There are an estimated 2000-3000 reported cases per year of mesothelioma. Once the asbestos fiber is inhaled it commonly travels to the lungs or stomach. The body naturally attempts to expel foreign objects however due to the structure of asbestos it easily becomes lodged internally. Over time, the asbestos fiber agitates local cells and works its way to the mesothelial linings. Generally, the latency period for mesothelioma to form is 20-50 years.

The prognosis for mesothelioma is bleak. The average period of survival lasts only 4-18 months. A major factor of a diagnosis depends on the stage of the cancer as well as other factors such as age, sex, and medical history. More treatment options are being discovered from [clinical trials](#) by [mesothelioma doctors](#).

Currently, there is no safe level of asbestos exposure.

If you would like to find out more about mesothelioma please feel free to visit the [Mesothelioma Center](#), [Mesothelioma Twitter](#) and [Mesothelioma Facebook](#).