

The Truth About Asbestos In Your Home

A Complete Report For Anyone Starting A Home Repair Or
Remodeling Project

In this report you will find out:

What asbestos is.

What the dangers are of being exposed to asbestos.

Where you might find asbestos in your home.

How to test for asbestos before you start your project.

Disclaimer:

The content provided within this guide is intended for educational purposes only. It is not a legal or medical guide. It is incumbent upon the reader to employ best judgement in dealing with any material that may contain asbestos. A professional should be hired to investigate asbestos in your home. Information on this site is available from materials in the public domain. If you choose to collect your own samples, you do so at your own risk. Neither Adaptive Response Solutions, LLC nor Omni Environmental, Inc. is responsible or liable for any consequences that may result from implementing any information in this report. If you believe that you may have been exposed to asbestos, please contact your physician.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which has been used throughout history in a variety of applications. Because of its properties it has been used to strengthen other materials, as thermal or acoustical insulation, for fire protection and even as decoration.

Asbestos can only be identified by laboratories using certain types of microscopes and analytical procedures.

How Can Asbestos Harm Me and My Family?

Asbestos can cause cancer. It is a well known and well researched carcinogen. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), breathing high levels of asbestos fibers like those in some building materials can lead to a higher risk of the following diseases:

- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma - a cancer which occurs in the lining of the chest and abdomen
- Asbestosis - a condition in which the lungs become scarred with fibrous tissue

Research shows that the chances of developing lung cancer and mesothelioma increase when more asbestos fibers are inhaled. People who breathe in asbestos fibers and also smoke have an even higher risk of developing lung cancer. Individuals that develop asbestosis are typically those who have been exposed to high levels of asbestos such as those who have worked in the asbestos mining industry or with asbestos insulation.

While most of us have not worked in the asbestos mining or insulation business we may still have been exposed to small amounts of asbestos in our daily lives. Although it's probably true that most of us will not develop asbestos related diseases, it is important to understand that materials that contain asbestos may release asbestos fibers into the air that we can breathe and that breathing these asbestos fibers increases our risk for developing asbestos diseases.

Asbestos exposure can become a problem during home remodeling or repair projects where building materials can be sawed, scraped or sanded into dust or powder.

Where Might I Find Asbestos In My House During A Repair or Remodeling Project?

Most products made today do not contain asbestos. Although there are a few products made which still contain asbestos that could be inhaled, they are required to be labeled as such.

However, until the late 1970s, many types of building products and insulation materials used in homes contained asbestos. And these materials may have also been used in homes that were built in the early 1980s.

Asbestos was used in many home construction materials. Here are just a few:

- TEXTURED, "POPCORN" or "COTTAGE CHEESE" CEILINGS or WALLS or any material that is typically sprayed or troweled on. Sanding or scraping these surfaces may release asbestos.
- FLOOR TILES or SHEET FLOORING as well as any glues or mastics that are used with flooring material. Breaking or sanding tiles as well as sanding or tearing sheet flooring may release asbestos into the air.
- TEXTURED PAINT, PATCHING COMPOUNDS OR JOINT COMPOUNDS especially in wall or ceiling joints.
- INSULATION especially in homes built before 1950.
- ROOFING and SIDING SHINGLES (Transite shingles)
- HOT WATER and STEAM PIPES may be coated with asbestos material, cloth or tape.
- WALLS and FLOORS especially around woodburning stoves may be coated with asbestos paper, millboard or asbestos cement sheets.
- ARTIFICIAL ASHES or EMBERS used in fireplaces.
- SINK or BASIN soundproofing or insulation.
- WINDOW GLAZING or Caulking.
- Many other building and insulation materials.

How To Positively Identify Asbestos in Building and Insulation Materials

There is no way you can tell whether a material contains asbestos just by looking at it. You should treat any suspect material as if it DOES contain asbestos. In most cases, material that contains asbestos should be left alone if it is in good condition.

However, if you are planning to remodel or repair any material that may contain asbestos you should have it tested first.

The next section will tell you exactly how to collect a sample from your home and have it tested for asbestos.

Warning: Please Read This Section Carefully

*Asbestos is a known carcinogen. That means it can cause cancer. There may be no safe level of exposure. If asbestos containing materials are disturbed or if a sample is taken improperly, asbestos fibers may be released into the air. **Taking a sample yourself is not recommended. A licensed or certified professional should collect samples for analysis.** Please consult your state health agency for more information.*

The following sampling procedure is from the United States Consumer Products Safety Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency and the American Lung Association. This procedure, along with the recommendations that follow should be used to collect a sample for asbestos analysis should you choose to do it yourself rather than hire a professional.

HOW TO COLLECT A SAMPLE FOR ASBESTOS ANALYSIS

You can't tell whether a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it, unless it is labeled. If in doubt, treat the material as if it contains asbestos or have it sampled and analyzed by a qualified professional. **A professional should take samples for analysis**, since a professional knows what to look for, and because there may be an increased health risk if fibers are released. In fact, if done incorrectly, sampling can be more hazardous than leaving the material alone. Taking samples yourself is not recommended. If you nevertheless choose to take the samples yourself, take care not to release asbestos fibers into the air or onto yourself. Material that is in good condition and will not be disturbed (by remodeling, for example) should be left alone. Only material that is damaged or will be disturbed should be sampled. Anyone who samples asbestos-containing materials should have as much information as possible on the handling of asbestos before sampling, and at a minimum, should observe the following procedures:

- * Make sure no one else is in the room when sampling is done.
- * Wear disposable gloves or wash hands after sampling.
- * Shut down any heating or cooling systems to minimize the spread of any released fibers.
- * Do not disturb the material any more than is needed to take a small sample.
- * Place a plastic sheet on the floor below the area to be sampled.
- * Wet the material using a fine mist of water containing a few drops of detergent before taking the sample. The water/detergent mist will reduce the release of asbestos fibers.
- * Carefully cut a piece from the entire depth of the material using, for example, a small knife, corer, or other sharp object. Place the small piece into a clean container (for example, a 35 mm film canister, small glass or plastic vial, or high quality resealable plastic bag).
- * Tightly seal the container after the sample is in it.
- * Carefully dispose of the plastic sheet. Use a damp paper towel to clean up any material on the outside of the container or around the area sampled. Dispose of asbestos materials according to state and local procedures.
- * Label the container with an identification number and clearly state when and where the sample was taken.
- * Patch the sampled area with the smallest possible piece of duct tape to prevent fiber release.

The original document can be seen here: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/453.html>

Here are some additional recommendations which homeowners who have collected their own samples have found extremely useful:

- * Use the sharpest knife possible to cut out the sample.
- * Most samples should be about the size of a quarter.
- * Place the sample in a zip-loc or resealable bag. Squeeze the air out of the bag *before* placing the sample inside and then seal it securely so that no air is trapped inside.
- * When sampling popcorn/textured ceiling or textured wall material, cut all the way into the substrate to remove a sample. *Do not* just scrape the paint layer.

- * Also when sampling popcorn/textured ceiling you may wish to take more than one sample if the area involved is large and/or does not appear to be homogeneous.
- * When sampling floor tile, use a sharp knife to cut out about a square inch of tile. Get a sample that also has some of the tile's mastic or glue attached to it as this may also contain asbestos.
- * Assign each sample a number and write it on the resealable bag. Make note of the sample number and the location where you took the sample.
- * Write this number on the Sample Submission form (see below) that you will send to the lab. The lab will reference this number on the report that they send you.

How To Send Your Samples To The Laboratory

Once you have collected the sample, you should send it to an unbiased accredited laboratory that has experience in analyzing samples for homeowners. The laboratory should be accredited by the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) at the National Institute of Standards and technology (NIST).

The recommended laboratory for asbestos analysis is Omni Environmental, Inc (Accreditation # 102061-0). This laboratory is accredited by NVLAP and has over 16 years of experience and has analyzed thousands of samples for homeowners. You can verify this laboratory's credentials by clicking on the following link which will take you to the NVLAP/NIST site: <http://ts.nist.gov/Standards/scopes/1020610.htm>

Please print out the following form and include it with your samples and a check for \$40 per sample. You will receive a complete report within 3 - 4 business days after samples are received.

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ASBESTOS SAMPLE SUBMISSION FORM

OMNI ENVIRONMENTAL, INC. (LAB # 102061-0)
8900 Shoal Creek Blvd. Ste. 121
Austin, TX 78757
(512) 258-9114

Your Name: _____

Phone #: (____) _____ - _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Sample #	Location Where Sample Was Taken (For your own records)

Number of samples submitted: _____ X \$40 = \$_____

Please include this form and a check for the total amount. Place the sample(s), the form and the check inside a large sturdy envelope. *Do not place the form or the check inside the bag containing the sample.*

You will receive an analytical report within 3-4 days after the lab receives the samples.

Send the sample via mail or courier (FedEx, UPS) to the following address:

Omni Environmental, Inc. Attn: Lab
8900 Shoal Creek Blvd. Ste. 121
Austin, TX 78757