



Safety Share

Asbestos

Asbestos is the name for a group of naturally occurring minerals (chrysotile, amosite crocidolite). Once called the “magic mineral” because of its incombustibility, chemical resistance, strength and flexibility; asbestos became commonly used to make building materials.

How can asbestos affect my health?

When asbestos is disturbed, it can release fibers into the air. Repeated exposure to these fibers can cause irreversible lung diseases like asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. These diseases typically develop 15-30 years after exposure.

What can I do to protect myself?

Before renovating or demolishing a building or structure built prior to 1990, make sure it has been assessed for hazardous building materials like asbestos.

If you are unsure if a material contains asbestos, have it tested by a qualified professional.

The key to protecting yourself from exposure to asbestos is to know where it is and avoid disturbing it.

Common asbestos containing materials include:

- Exterior building materials such as caulking, cement shingles, felt singles, flashing, mastic/pitch, siding, tarpaper and torch-on.
- Interior building materials such as acoustic ceiling tiles, drywall joint compound, fireproofing, flooring, pipe insulation, plaster and textured finishes.
- Automotive products such as brake pads, clutch pads, drum linings and transmission components.

Many of these materials are no longer in use but Canada still imports asbestos containing products each year to be used in high-friction automotive and mechanical components.

