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Asbestos Around Us : Are You In a Danger?

Because of its great qualities such as resistance to heat, fire, wear or chemicals, asbestos used to be a very desirable material - until a short time ago.

Asbestos was used for decades to make a broad range of things, varying from building material to toys or clothes. The fact that asbestos is also poisonous became clear just some 50 years ago. What does asbestos poisoning actually mean? A lot of industrial fields have been utilizing asbestos especially for its durability, which is the material's most important advantage and disadvantage at the same time. If asbestos gets into a human body, there is no means for the body to get rid of this material.

Asbestos is quite harmless, on the condition it is still compound in the material it is part of. What is dangerous for humans is inhaling the tiny needle-like asbestos fibers, when they get airborne. The trouble with asbestos poisoning is that its first symptoms such as dry cough, tightness in the chest or shortness of breath match the symptoms of many less serious diseases. Combined with the length of the latency period, the real cause of trouble is often found out too late.

Asbestos poisoning causes asbestosis, mesothelioma or lung cancer, to name just the most common sicknesses. When a person suffers from asbestosis, his/her lungs are trying to dissolve the asbestos fibers by creating acid. This acid later scars the tissue around and makes it harder. Eventually, the ability to breath is very limited. Mesothelioma is a type of cancer that affects the outer lung lining. There is presently no known treatment for this disease. A person can get mesothelioma from being exposed to asbestos poisoning for just a very short period or even accidentally, which is a major difference from asbestosis. More than 50 percent of all deaths from asbestos poisoning was caused by asbestos-induced lung cancer. However, an early and correct diagnosis and prompt beginning of the treatment can bring the patient quite a lot of years of active life.

Asbestos in Canada Canada used to be one of the leading asbestos producers and still supports its use in less dangerous variations and mines in Quebec are still operating. Until the 1980s, the majority of office buildings, public buildings and schools had thermal, fire and sound insulation made of asbestos. The workers who worked on installing the asbestos materials were the ones in the most serious danger, especially if they didn't care about health and safety rules, allowed the dust to get into the air and then breathed in the toxins. The use of asbestos still hasn't been forbidden in Canada. However, things have improved a little - using asbestos as insulation material has been forbidden in Ontario in 1973. Local governments have made an effort to remove asbestos from public buildings, and any work involving asbestos installation or removal is under very severe regulations.

Asbestos in Toronto Since 2007, Ontario has established severe rules for asbestos used in buildings. Landlords have to submit any strange material deteriorating in the building for examination. In case it is discovered that asbestos is really present, it has to be removed immediately by a certified company. If there is any danger of continuous deterioration, the whole affected area has to be removed, again according to strict safety rules.

The most common use of asbestos in non-domestic buildings: - insulation on pipes - ceiling tiles - panels boards - cement panels - sprayed coatings on walls - asbestos ropes and cloth - textures coating
The most common use of asbestos in residential homes in Toronto: - exterior surfaces: deck undersheeting, roof felt and shingles, window putty - all kinds of insulation - flooring: vinyl asbestos sheets, tiles and undersheeting - interior surface: sprayed-on acoustic ceilings, acoustic tiles - appliances: water heaters, range hoods, clothes dryers and dishwashers
Asbestos is still not a solved issue. The Sunrise Propane blast which took place last year is still in our memories. The blast hit 5 streets by asbestos debris and in the time following the blast, 3000 residents had to leave their houses and the whole area had to be completely cleaned up. The danger posed by asbestos is still here and local governments have to keep struggling with it. But the exact range of this danger is nearly impossible to be quantified. It has been found out that just 0.5% of asbestos in material is really poisonous, so that's also why it is so difficult to trace back all the possible dangers.

So if you have any suspicion that your property might have been affected, you should ask for it to be inspected by professionals (the list of such companies in the [Toronto](#) region is easy to be found). Under no circumstances, you should try to deal with the suspect material yourself!

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