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Asbestos : Still a Danger

Until not too long ago, asbestos used to be admired for its special characteristics: being resistant to heat, fire, chemicals and wear made it a very valued material.

For a long time, people used to make a lot of things out of asbestos, such as building material, clothes or toys. But then, about 50 years ago, it was found out that it was poisonous. Asbestos poisoning - what is it actually? The durability of asbestos, which numerous industries have been making use of, is its biggest plus and minus at the same time. On the other hand, when present in human bodies, the body has no means of disposing of it.

If asbestos is part of some material, as long as it stays in it, it is not dangerous. It only becomes dangerous when the small needle-like fibers become airborne, which makes them likely to be inhaled. But the first symptoms of asbestos poisoning, such as dry cough, chest tightness or short breath may be confused with some less dangerous diseases. Unfortunately, asbestos poisoning has also quite a long latency period. Therefore the true reason of the patient's problems is often found out too late.

Asbestos poisoning causes asbestosis, mesothelioma or lung cancer, to name just the most common diseases. Asbestosis is caused by the lungs trying to dissolve the asbestos fibers by producing acid, scarring the tissue, causing it to harden. Finally, the person can breath only with difficulty. Mesothelioma is an incurable cancer of the outer lining of the lungs. A person can get mesothelioma from being exposed to asbestos poisoning for only a very brief period or even accidentally, which is a major difference from asbestosis. More than 50 percent of the patients dying because of asbestos poisoning suffer from asbestos-induced lung cancer. Nevertheless, if the diagnosis is determined correctly and the patient begins the treatment early, he/she is quite likely to have an active life for many years after.

Asbestos in Canada Canada used to be one of the main asbestos producers and still supports its use in less dangerous variations and mines in Quebec are still operating. Until the 1980s, asbestos had been widely used in most office buildings, public buildings and schools, mostly for thermal, fire and sound insulation. The workers who were busy 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 atmosphere and then breathed in the toxins. Using asbestos is still allowed in Canada. There are nevertheless some improvements - Ontario has made using asbestos as insulation material banned back in 1973. Asbestos has been predominantly removed from public buildings as a result of an effort by the local governments. There are also very strict guidelines for any work involving asbestos installation or removal.

Asbestos in Toronto What regards asbestos in buildings, Ontario has very severe rules, especially since 2007. Landlords have to deliver any strange material deteriorating in the building for examination. There are professional companies that can remove the asbestos safely, if its presence is found out. In case there is a danger that the deterioration might continue, the whole affected area has to be removed, again under severe 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 A satisfactory solution for the whole problem of asbestos hasn't been found yet. We all still remember the Sunrise Propane blast from last year. The blast hit 5 streets by asbestos debris and in the time following the blast, 3000 inhabitants 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 fighting with it. But it is really difficult to say how dangerous asbestos actually is. As just 0.5% of asbestos in material is considered toxic, it's hard to trace back all the potential dangers.

Therefore, whenever you have even the slightest suspicion that your property may be affected, ask for a home inspection by a qualified professional (you can easily find list of companies doing it in [Toronto](#) region). Anyway, people should in no case try to deal with the suspect material on their own!

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