



“The future belongs
to those who
prepare for it today”

Helping you cope with Asbestosis
and Pleural Thickening



About this booklet

If you are diagnosed with asbestosis or pleural thickening there is a lot you can do to take control and live a full life.

There are many good people ready to help you, your family and friends deal with any challenges you may face whilst living with a lung disease.

This booklet aims to give you and your loved-ones some important information about your disease and the medical, financial and emotional help available. It is also a stepping stone to a lot more information, services and people you can call on when you're ready.

“ The first step I took was to get help - it stopped me from worrying and made all the difference ”



For more help and support visit: www.nationalasbestos.co.uk

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a pink top, is leaning over an elderly man with white hair, wearing a beige sweater. They are both looking down at a black tablet computer that the woman is holding. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“Once I knew what I was dealing with I could plan for the future and reassure my family”

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What is Asbestosis?

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Asbestosis is a form of lung disease caused by breathing in asbestos dust.

In most cases asbestosis will have little or no impact on a person's life-span. The disease usually progresses slowly and, in many cases, remains stable. In rare instances deterioration can be more rapid but there is no reliable way of predicting its progress.

Asbestosis occurs in individuals who have had exposure to high levels of asbestos over many years. The asbestos fibres permanently damage the alveoli (air sacs which supply oxygen to the blood stream) in the lungs.

How is it diagnosed?

The disease is diagnosed by x-rays, chest CT scans and lung capacity tests.

What are the symptoms?

It is possible to have a degree of asbestosis and not suffer from any symptoms. In these cases the asbestosis is only revealed because of an incidental scan or other diagnostic procedure.

If a person does show symptoms, it won't be until 10 to 50 years after exposure to asbestos.

Symptoms include breathlessness and some people may develop a cough.

What are the treatments?

Asbestosis does not require any specific drug treatment other than managing symptoms to improve quality of life.

In patients with severe symptoms certain treatments can help. For example, in some cases oxygen therapy, low doses of pain medication or steroids.

Extra information

Asbestosis is evidence that a person has been exposed to asbestos. So it is important to keep an eye on your general health and to consult your GP or specialist if you experience other symptoms, such as chest pain, coughing up blood or unexpected weight loss.

What is Pleural Thickening?

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In the majority of cases pleural thickening has little or no impact on a person's life span. The disease usually progresses slowly and, in many cases, remains stable, but there is no reliable way of predicting its progress.

In simple terms, pleural thickening refers to thickening of the lining of the lung, called the pleura, which is a thin layer that covers the inside of the rib cage and the outside of the lungs.

Diffuse pleural thickening (DPT) is when the pleura thickens to the extent that it causes breathlessness. This condition is frequently, but not exclusively, caused by exposure to asbestos dust. When pleural thickening is found in both lungs it is referred to as bilateral pleural thickening.

How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis of asbestos related pleural thickening is by a chest x-ray, CT scan and lung capacity tests, combined with a history of exposure to asbestos dust.

What are the symptoms?

In normal circumstances the pleural lining allows the lungs to move smoothly while breathing. Where there is significant pleural thickening breathing can be restricted. This often causes breathlessness and tightness across the chest. The severity varies depending how extensive the thickening is.

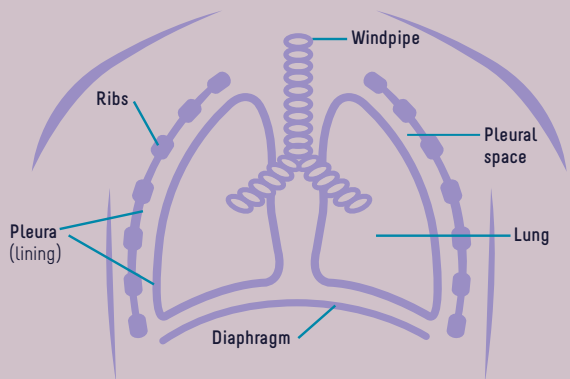
What are the treatments?


There is no specific treatment for pleural thickening, but someone with the condition needs to be seen by a chest consultant periodically to check for any changes. Often regular exercise will be encouraged to help retain lung function and general fitness levels.

Extra information

Pleural thickening may also occur with no impact on lung capacity. This condition is referred to as pleural plaques. It is of no clinical importance and causes no symptoms.

Pleural thickening and pleural plaques (due to asbestos) are evidence that a person has been exposed to asbestos. So it is important to keep an eye on your general health and to consult your GP or specialist if you experience other symptoms, such as chest pain, coughing up blood or unexpected weight loss.





“ I just needed someone to talk through things in a way that I could understand ”

For more help and support visit: www.nationalasbestos.co.uk



“ It’s a big and worrying change in my life, but I’m not going to let it stop me ”

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Get help and live your life

With the right advice and support there is no reason why you can't take control and continue to live a remarkable life. Of course, a lung condition is a worry, but the important thing is to ask for help from people who understand what you're going through.

Tell your GP about your diagnosis. They can assist with any health and emotional worries and also offer support to family members or friends caring for you.

Talk to the local respiratory specialist nurses about asbestosis and diffuse pleural thickening. They can tell you about treatments, how to manage your symptoms and what medical care is available.

It may be appropriate to contact your council's social services department about a carer's assessment. They may be able to offer practical assistance in your home as well as financial support and benefits. There are also private care organisations who can assist.

If you feel that you need emotional support then the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy can provide a list of qualified psychotherapists and counsellors who can help.

Whether it is practical help, care at home or just someone to talk to who knows what it's like, we can put you in touch with some amazing charities and organisations that are ready to help.

The British Lung Foundation

Age UK

Carers Trust

Carers UK

Veterans UK

SSFA



“ Everyone I’ve met and spoken to have been wonderful. I don’t think we could have got through this without them ”

For more help and support visit: www.nationalasbestos.co.uk

“ I could leave all the financial paperwork to the experts and get on with living my life ”



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Financial Assistance

After working hard all your life, accepting financial assistance and benefits can make a person feel ill at ease.

But you have earned the right to financial support and it will help at a time when you don't need to add money to your worries.

We can investigate your eligibility and apply for important benefits available to people who have been exposed to asbestos, such as:

- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), which helps people who are ill or disabled from an accident or disease caused by work.
- Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 could help some people if their ex employer no longer exists.
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) are there to assist those with long term ill health.
- Attendance Allowance helps pay for personal care for those aged 65 or over.
- Carer's Allowance for family or friends looking after you.
- War Pensions Scheme is for people exposed to asbestos during military service.

Compensation

If you are diagnosed with asbestosis or pleural thickening it is important to act and seek legal advice - even if you have no asbestos related symptoms.

This isn't about blame or a claims culture.
It's about protecting your rights.

You have worked hard all your life and you are owed financial peace of mind so you can live a fulfilling future.

What should happen:

It is vital to pursue your legal rights when you are told you have asbestosis or pleural thickening - even if you think that the condition is not causing you many problems.

The reason is that these lung diseases can be progressive and indicate past exposure to asbestos dust, which carries with it the risk of more serious illnesses. There is a legal time limit for seeking asbestos compensation. If you don't act but subsequently your condition gets worse, or you get a more serious illness, you may be out of time for claiming compensation.

By taking legal advice soon after your diagnosis - even if the symptoms do not seem too bad at that time - you can opt for a provisional damages settlement. This allows you to return for further damages if you suffer a significant deterioration

in your current condition or get another serious illness. You are protecting your rights by obtaining a provisional damages settlement.

It is very important to work with a solicitor experienced in asbestosis and diffuse pleural thickening cases. A specialist solicitor will shoulder the burden and let you and your family focus on the future.

The solicitor will also handle separate claims for government benefits including Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit.

Also, you may be entitled to a lump sum payment from the government under the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979. This is payable where the companies are not trading, and it can be a significant amount which is paid quickly by the government.

For more information about compensation claims contact The National Asbestos Helpline.

Helpline: 0808 274 9185 **Email:** enquiries@nationalasbestos.co.uk **Website:** www.nationalasbestos.co.uk

“ It’s not about the money. This is about the courts recognising that we’ve been let down ”



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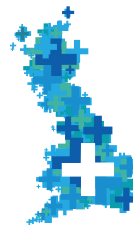
We are proud supporters of

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Maggie's offers practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends. Maggie Keswick Jencks Cancer Caring Centres Trust (Maggie's) is a registered charity, No. SC024414



Association of Respiratory
Nurse Specialists



National
Asbestos
Helpline

For more information about compensation claims contact
The National Asbestos Helpline.

Freephone 0808 274 9185

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