



Asbestosis & Mesothelioma
Association of Australia


AMAA

Asbestos Related Diseases

Asbestosis | Mesothelioma
Lung Cancer | Pleural Disease

connecting | raising awareness | supporting | advocating

1800 017 758 | www.asbestosassociation.com.au

A black and white photograph of an industrial facility. In the foreground, a metal staircase with railings leads up to a platform. On the platform, there is a large piece of equipment, possibly a boiler or a large tank, which is heavily insulated with a thick, light-colored material, likely asbestos lagging. Various pipes and valves are visible throughout the scene. The background shows the structural elements of the building, including beams and a roof. The overall scene depicts a typical industrial environment from the mid-20th century.

Asbestos lagging was widely used in industrial factories to reduce or prevent heat loss in hot pipes and other plant equipment. It was in the mid 1970's that asbestos lagging ceased to be manufactured in Australia.

Asbestosis and Mesothelioma (lung cancer) Association of Australia

The Asbestosis & Mesothelioma Association of Australia (AMAA) is a not-for profit organisation which seeks to assist those affected by asbestos disease.

Our goals are that sufferers of asbestos related diseases will be offered a better quality of life; have access to greater treatment options and care; and, through research, cures will be found for all asbestos related conditions.

Assistance provided by AMAA includes but is not limited to:-

- connecting members with health professionals who specialise in treating mesothelioma and other asbestos diseases which includes access to specialist doctors that bulk bill AMAA members;
- holding seminars throughout Queensland and New South Wales which focus on asbestos disease issues and raising awareness about the dangers of asbestos exposure;
- regular monthly forums and newsletters to allow members to connect with each other and stay abreast of asbestos issues;
- providing support to members diagnosed with asbestos disease and assisting family members through tough times;
- raising funds to find a cure for mesothelioma; and
- advocating for members legal rights against entities like James Hardie.

Remember, you are not alone and AMAA can put you in contact with people who are in a similar situation and have been affected by asbestos disease. AMAA is here to support you and your family.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral mined from rock and made up of many small fibres.

It is extremely tough and was widely used in building products because of its high resistance to fire and chemicals, and its effectiveness as an insulator.

Due to its durability, asbestos was used in a variety of different ways.

Examples include:

- Asbestos cement building products such as flat fibro sheets, corrugated fibro roof sheets and fibro guttering
- Asbestos insulation products
- Asbestos brake linings and brake pads
- Asbestos floor tiles

Many of the above products were extensively used in Australia and are still present in many homes today.



Asbestos fibres are 50 to 200 times thinner than a human hair, can float in the air for a long time, can be invisible to the naked eye and can be breathed into the lungs. The prolonged inhalation of these fibres can cause serious illnesses including lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis.

Asbestos History

Early 1900s - medical practitioners began to raise concerns that exposure to asbestos was causing deaths of asbestos workers through respiratory diseases

1930s - there was a substantial accumulation of scientific knowledge concerning asbestos related disease

1960s - low dose asbestos exposure is a recognised cause of mesothelioma in a domestic setting from laundering work clothes

1980s - asbestos building products were gradually removed from production and phased out of use

2000s - asbestos was banned completely in Australia from 31 December 2003

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About Asbestos Related Diseases

Asbestos related diseases develop when a person has inhaled microscopic asbestos fibres which become lodged in the lung tissue and the lining of the lung, stomach or heart. The asbestos fibres are too small for the body to remove through normal functioning (eg coughing) and the asbestos fibres become embedded in the lung tissue.

The asbestos fibres begin to irritate the surrounding cells and over time many people will develop asbestos related diseases. In fact, it can take decades between the time you breathe in the asbestos fibres to the time you develop symptoms and are diagnosed with an asbestos related disease.

There are a number of different types of asbestos related diseases that are cancerous or benign. Asbestos related diseases are diagnosed and monitored using:

- x-ray images;
- CT scans;
- lung function tests; and,
- in some cases through biopsy or surgery.

While there is a great deal of research currently underway into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of asbestos related diseases, there are currently no cures for any of the various types of asbestos related diseases. There are however treatments available that can delay the progression of your disease, relieve symptoms and minimise health complications.

It is important that you have a good treating doctor and health care team to assist you in managing your asbestos related condition. AMAA can also offer you friendship, support and understanding - we are here to help you and your family.



Worker using the number one machine at the Hardie BI factory to manufacture insulation products.

About Asbestos Related Diseases *continued*

Benign (non-cancerous)

Pleural Plaques

Pleural plaques are thickened and hardened patches that can develop on the lining of the lung (the pleura) and/or the diaphragm as a result of past exposure to asbestos. Pleural plaques are benign and do not change to become cancerous.

Pleural plaques result from inflammation and irritation of the outer lining of the lung. Pleural plaques can spread and develop slowly, and in some cases calcify, causing a gradual decline in your ability to breathe and chest pain.

Many people diagnosed with pleural plaques experience pain and discomfort (including pain in the chest, arms or referred pain in their shoulder and back). In severe cases, patients report shortness of breath and fatigue. There are treatments available to alleviate these symptoms and you should talk to your treating doctor about a suitable pain management plan.

It is important that you carefully monitor your condition with your doctor - the presence of pleural plaques on your lungs is an indicator that you have been exposed to asbestos in the past and you may be at an increased risk of developing other asbestos related diseases such as asbestosis and mesothelioma.



Asbestos Pleural Disease

Asbestos related pleural disease is generally referred to as benign asbestos related pleural effusion - meaning a fluid build up on the lung(s).

Symptoms include shortness of breath and discomfort. When the pleural fluid eventually goes away, the pleura on the lung may become thickened which can compress the lung.

Asbestosis

Asbestosis is a scarring of the lung tissue caused by asbestos fibres.

This scarring can also be termed fibrosis. Asbestosis is a chronic lung disease that usually worsens over time as the scarring progressively grows even if no further asbestos is inhaled. The scar tissue causes the lungs to stiffen and restricts the ability of the lung to expand and contract leading to shortness of breath.

Sufferers of asbestosis can develop mild to severe symptoms such as:

- breathing difficulties (severe cases may require oxygen);
- chest pain;
- dry and/or productive cough;
- increased risk of developing lung cancer, particularly if you smoke; and,
- increased risk of developing heart related symptoms (eg heart failure, abnormal heart rhythm etc).

Treatments for many of these symptoms are available through your treating doctor and may help to improve your breathing and your quality of life. Currently there is no cure for asbestosis so it is important that you closely monitor your condition with your treating doctors who will assist you in managing your symptoms.



About Asbestos Related Diseases *continued*

Malignant (cancerous)

Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a rare and aggressive asbestos related cancer which can develop in the lining of the membrane of the internal organs.

The most common type is pleural mesothelioma which occurs in the lining of the lung from asbestos fibres being inhaled. Peritoneal mesothelioma occurs in the lining of the abdominal cavity (peritoneum) as a consequence of asbestos fibres being ingested. In rare cases, mesothelioma can develop in other areas of the body including the lining of the heart (pericardial mesothelioma).

Mesothelioma is a terminal disease and there is currently no known cure. Mesothelioma spreads rapidly and the

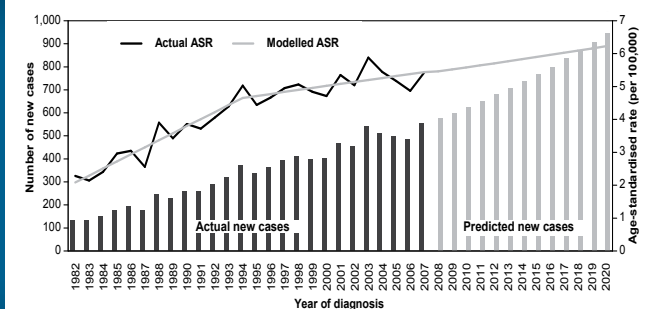
average life expectancy following diagnosis is about 6 to 12 months, although there are cases of people living many years with mesothelioma.

The typical time lag between exposure to asbestos and the development of symptoms and/or diagnosis is between 20 to 40 years - this delay is often referred to as the “latency period”. The onset of mesothelioma is rarely less than 10 years from exposure and may be more than 50 years. In Australia the incidence of mesothelioma is higher in men than women.


Mesothelioma is not related to smoking - it is considered to be almost exclusively caused by asbestos.

While only a small percentage of people exposed to asbestos will develop mesothelioma, the incidence of mesothelioma in Australia continues to rise and is not expected to peak until the 2020s.

Trends in number of new cases and age-standardised incidence rates 1982 to 2007, projected to 2020.



Source from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737421440>



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Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is a tumour that develops inside the lung tissue, often starting in the lining of the bronchi tubes. This is different to mesothelioma which develops in the lining of the lung.

There are many known causes of lung cancer including exposure to asbestos and smoking cigarettes. In fact, if you have been exposed to asbestos in the past and you have a smoking history, you are at increased risk of developing lung cancer. Lung cancer can affect people who have never smoked but have a history of past asbestos exposure.

Lung cancer can be treated through surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and targeted therapies. There are cases of lung cancer being successfully treated and it is important that you speak to your doctor about all treatment options available to you.

How AMAA Can Help You



Treatment and Disease Management

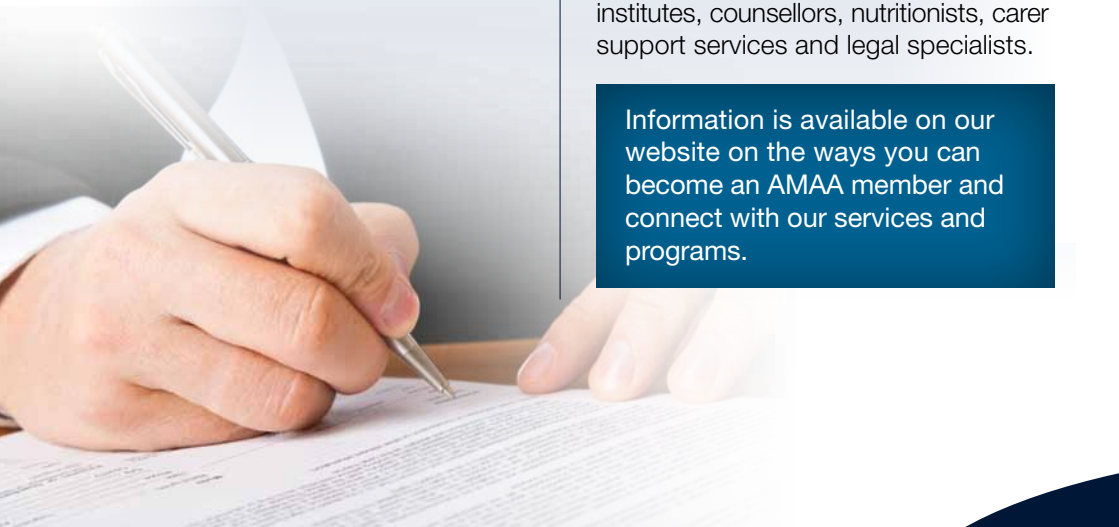
There is a lot of information available to the public about asbestos and when you are confronted with a diagnosis with asbestos related disease the information can be confusing, overwhelming and complex. AMAA volunteers can help you to find your way through the information so that you better understand your disease and reduce any fear and anxiety you may feel. This will allow you to make your own decisions about what is best for you.



Connection to Asbestos Professionals

You need access to reliable medical information in order for you to make informed choices about the care and treatment you want for your asbestos related disease. AMAA offers you a wide variety of information to help you better understand your disease and improve your wellbeing. AMAA is able to connect you with our network to get your questions answered so that you feel empowered to manage your disease. We can connect you with health professionals familiar with asbestos related diseases such as medical practitioners, research institutes, counsellors, nutritionists, carer support services and legal specialists.

Information is available on our website on the ways you can become an AMAA member and connect with our services and programs.





Support Services

AMAA seeks to provide you with a non-threatening environment to ask questions and gain a better understanding of your condition from people who are also dealing with asbestos related disease. AMAA is a not-for profit association which is run by members who volunteer their services and our programs are apolitical and non-denominational. We can support you and your family through:

- **Peer to Peer Patient Connections**
- speaking to other patients can provide insights into what to expect and how to manage your symptoms. Talking to someone who understands your concerns and has walked a similar path is extremely beneficial.
- **Counselling and Emotional Support** - if you or a loved one are experiencing distress or difficulty due to an asbestos related condition, you may benefit from speaking to a qualified practitioner.
- **Social events** - AMAA members regularly come together in friendship and fellowship.



Protecting Your Rights and Interests

AMAA can assist you to connect with experts on legal matters to ensure you receive the help required to deal with your diagnosis and includes assistance with:

- Advanced Health Directives
- Enduring Power of Attorney
- Wills

Information and Support Centre
24 hour helpline
1800 017 758

For further information about Asbestosis Related Diseases
and how AMAA can help you and your family please visit
our website at **www.asbestosassociation.com.au**,
we are here to help in any way we can.



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