

Asbestos Exposure

The naturally occurring mineral asbestos has been praised for its heat and fire-resistant properties for centuries. It has also been inexpensive and readily available, making it even more desirable for companies wishing to increase or maintain their profits. One of the industries that have made widespread use of asbestos is the metal works industry. Traditionally, plants that manufactured steel, aluminum, and iron often used asbestos in a variety of ways to help protect employees. Even asbestos clothing was worn in these plants and often included shirts, pants, gloves, aprons, and masks. Hot equipment such as furnaces, boilers, generators, and pipes were also lined with asbestos, which made it quite easy to inhale asbestos fibers.

As long as asbestos fibers remain bound in these materials, it does not present a serious health hazard. However, when [asbestos-containing materials](#) are damaged or disturbed, toxic fibers can be released into the air. These microscopic asbestos fibers are easily inhaled and it is extremely difficult for the body to expel them. In fact, exposure to asbestos can cause a variety of illnesses, such as lung cancer, asbestosis, and [mesothelioma](#), a rare form of cancer that affects the body's mesothelial linings of the lungs, heart, and abdomen. Asbestos is also known to cause gastrointestinal cancer and has been linked to colon cancer as well. Typically, these diseases do not exhibit symptoms for 15 to 50 years after initial exposure, making it especially difficult for [mesothelioma treatments](#) to have an effect.

Those who have previously worked in aluminum plants, steel mills, and iron works are especially at risk of contracting asbestos-related diseases. Even today, more than 30 years after the U.S. government issued warnings about the use of asbestos, individuals are still being diagnosed with diseases such as [pleural mesothelioma](#). If you or a loved one has worked for a metal works factory, it is important to seek the advice of a medical doctor. For more resources on asbestos, the various forms of asbestos cancer, and other illnesses caused by asbestos exposure, please visit the [Mesothelioma Cancer Center](#).