

Asbestos in the home

This leaflet provides advice and
guidance in managing asbestos in
your home.



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre. As it is flexible and fire-resistant it was historically used in a number of building products to add strength, provide insulation and for fire protection. However, owing to health concerns over its use, properties built since 2000 are unlikely to contain asbestos.

There are three main asbestos types. They are:-

- Chrysotile or white asbestos
- Amosite or brown asbestos
- Crocidolite or blue asbestos

Is asbestos still used?

The use of all three forms of asbestos has now been banned in the UK, with the UK ban on the use, supply and importation of white asbestos coming into effect from 1999. The use of blue and brown asbestos has been banned in the UK since the mid 1980s.

What are the health risks?

Asbestos-containing materials must be handled with great care at all times to avoid any risk of inhalation of asbestos fibres. All forms of asbestos material can release fibres if disturbed. Breathing in air containing asbestos fibre can lead to asbestos related diseases which are mainly cancers of the lung and chest lining. These diseases do not take effect immediately but later on in life, so there is a need for people to protect themselves against contracting an asbestos-related disease in the future. People who smoke and are also exposed to asbestos fibre are thought to be at a much greater risk of developing lung cancer.

Are we all exposed to asbestos?

Yes, everybody is exposed to asbestos fibre. There are very small levels of asbestos fibre in the air because it has been used so widely for so long. Exposure to this low level of fibre is currently considered unlikely to harm people's health. Levels of fibre may be higher in buildings containing asbestos materials, especially where the

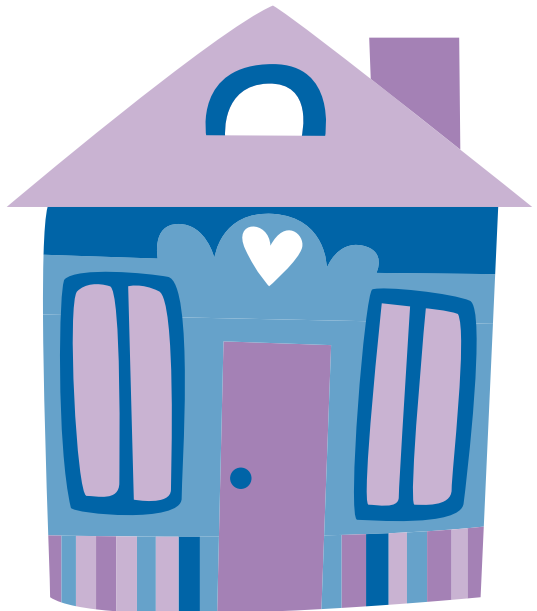
materials are damaged. It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibre found in buildings will be harmful; however, if you have damaged asbestos materials in your home you should seek advice on the appropriate action to take.



Where could you find asbestos at home?

Asbestos can be found in many different materials. Some common uses in the home include:

- Guttering and rainwater pipes
- External wall cladding and panels
- Soffit boards under roof fascia (fascia is where your gutters are normally clipped onto)
- Panels in the lower half of large window frames
- Sound-proofing
- Pads fitted beneath stainless-steel sinks
- Cold-water tanks in loft spaces
- Central-heating boiler flues
- Tiles, slats, canopies and firebreaks above ceilings
- Wall boarding to internal partitions, airing cupboards, shelving or ducts
- Decorative textured coatings (Artex-type materials)
- Heat-insulating gaskets, seals and panels behind or under heaters
- Panels on or inside fire-resisting doors
- Toilet cisterns
- Bath panels
- Floor tiles and lino or cushion-floor sheeting
- Corrugated roofing sheets, roof slates and tiles
- Roofing felts made from bitumen.



Can products or materials containing asbestos be easily identified?

Generally it is not easy to identify an asbestos product within the home as asbestos fibre can only be seen under a microscope. The only way to correctly identify if a material contains asbestos is by a laboratory test.

What should you do about asbestos in your home?

- Seek professional advice if you think you have damaged or deteriorating asbestos-containing materials in your home
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos lagging, spray coatings or insulation board by yourself. These materials should only be safely removed by a licensed contractor
- Leave asbestos-containing materials alone if they are in good condition and seek professional advice

- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos-containing materials
- Never drill, sand, saw or use a wire-brush on asbestos-containing materials
- Avoid breaking asbestos cement
- Do not use wallpaper scrapers on asbestos products
- Do not remove asbestos panels to gain access to services.

What do I do if I think I have disturbed asbestos?

Don't panic. Contact a specialist contractor and they will make arrangements to have the material assessed and sampled if required. They will then decide on the most appropriate course of action to ensure your safety.

You can get a list of specialist contractors at the Asbestos Testing and Consultancy (ATAc)

www.atac.org.uk

Things to remember about asbestos

Materials containing asbestos which are in good condition and left that way pose minimal risk to your health.

Try to ensure that anything you think may contain asbestos remains in good condition.

It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibre found in buildings will be harmful, but if you have damaged asbestos materials in your home, you should seek professional advice immediately. If you are aware that you have asbestos in the home and are planning home improvements or maintenance you must inform builders and other contractors before they start work.



The diagram below shows the most likely locations of asbestos within your home.

It is unlikely that your home contains asbestos in all of these places.

Key

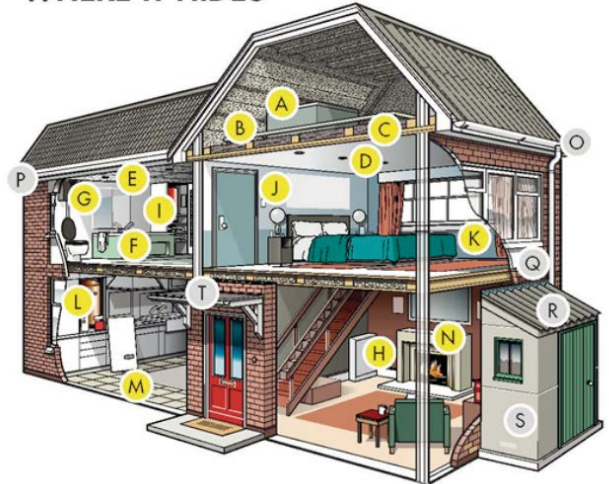
Inside

- A. Asbestos cement Water tank
- B. Pipe lagging
- C. Loose fill insulation
- D. Textured decorative coating eg Artex
- E. AIB ceiling tiles
- F. AIB bath panel
- G. Toilet seat and cistern
- H. AIB behind fuse box
- I. AIB airing cupboard and/or sprayed insulation coating boiler
- J. AIB partition wall
- K. AIB interior window panel
- L. AIB around boiler
- M. Vinyl floor tiles
- N. AIB behind fire

Outside

- O. Gutters and Asbestos cement downpipes
- P. Soffits – AIB or asbestos cement
- Q. AIB exterior window panel
- R. Asbestos cement roof

ASBESTOS WHERE IT HIDES



- S. Asbestos cement panels
- T. Roofing felt

AIB = Asbestos Insulating Board

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building.htm

Useful contacts

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) can also provide further information on asbestos and its disposal www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos

Asbestos Testing and Consultancy (ATaC) www.atac.org.uk

Asbestos Information Centre www.aic.org.uk

For further information please contact the Private Sector Housing team on: **01467 534753** or email private.housing@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

