



Asbestos

Asbestos is a mineral fibre. In the past, asbestos was mixed with cement to make it stronger and easier to mould into different shapes and sizes, such as fibro sheeting.

Is asbestos dangerous?

Asbestos in fibro sheeting can present a health risk if the sheeting is cut or sanded, causing the physical release of the asbestos fibres.

This material is considered safe if it is left undisturbed and is in good condition.

People who get health problems from inhaling asbestos have usually been exposed to high levels of asbestos over a very long period of time, such as people who have worked in asbestos mines or who have been employed in the production of fibro sheeting.

Asbestos fibres, when inhaled, can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. The risk of contracting these conditions increases as the amount of asbestos fibres inhaled increases.

Is it still used to build or repair Housing Plus homes?

No. Since 1986, asbestos has been banned for use in building products in NSW.

Fibro sheeting that may contain asbestos is still present in many homes, built before 1986. It was usually used as wall cladding, in eaves and in wet areas such as bathrooms and laundries.

Modern fibrous cement sheeting uses cellulose fibres instead of asbestos fibres and is considered a safe building material.

Am I in any danger?

The long-term risks of living in a home which contains asbestos products is extremely small relative to other risks experienced in our everyday lives.

It is important to realise there are very low levels of asbestos in the air that we breathe while going about our day-to-day lives.

What do I do if I suspect there is asbestos material in a home?

A significant number of the homes built before 1986 could contain some form of asbestos cement, irrespective if they are public housing or privately owned homes. If you think asbestos may be in your home, don't panic! If asbestos material is in good condition, and is left alone, it is harmless. Generally, material in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless fibres are released and inhaled into the lungs.

If the area you suspect has asbestos in it starts to show signs of wear or damage, such as tears or abrasions, contact the Housing Plus to report it.

Looking for more info?

- Contact your local Housing Plus office
- Visit housingplus.com.au
- Call us on 1800 603 300



Housing Plus will then assess the level of risk, which will probably require an inspection by our staff or contractors. Then we will determine and take appropriate actions to ensure your home remains a safe place to live.

The residential tenancy agreement signed by you at the beginning of your tenancy states that you are not to alter your home in any way without the permission of Housing Plus. This includes cutting into walls, drilling holes, making repairs and so forth.

If you request permission to do work on your home we will have to consider the risk of that work disturbing asbestos before we can grant permission.

What do I do if I think I have been exposed to asbestos dust?

Don't panic. The first thing is to make sure you are not exposed to any more dust. Call the local Housing Plus Branch to report the incident as soon as practical.

If you are worried that you have inhaled dust that may contain asbestos, it may be advisable to see your doctor for peace of mind.

What should I do if I or someone else accidentally has created a hole in some fibro sheeting?

Make sure everyone at your home stays clear of the area and contact Housing Plus.

An appropriately qualified contractor will come around as soon as possible and make sure the area is safe, and may take a sample for testing.

Remember, your safety comes first. Any matters as to who should pay for the repairs if you, your children or a friend has caused the hole can be dealt with at a later date.

Can I transfer out of my home because I think it has asbestos?

No. Housing Plus has been advised by Housing NSW, on the best advice from NSW Health and WorkCover, that fibro sheeting is safe if it is left unharmed.

I have been drilling holes in my walls to hang pictures. Should I do this?

No. While the possibility of this having any effect on your health is minimal, the slight chance still exists.

If I find cement sheeting lying on the ground or under my house, what should I do?

Don't touch it. Report it to Housing Plus and we will organise for it to be removed by an appropriately qualified contractor.

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