

# Independent Guide

## Can asbestos cause cancer?



Independent workplace compliance

### Introduction

Asbestos is the biggest workplace killer in the UK with over 5000 deaths per annum. There are two main diseases associated with asbestos, mesothelioma which is a type of cancer that develops in the thin tissue lining of internal organs and Asbestosis, a chronic lung disease which causes lung tissue scarring and shortness of breath.

Neither are curable but some treatments can prolong the onset of the disease.

### How harmful is asbestos?

Breathing in asbestos fibres can increase the risk of several serious diseases included cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no cure from asbestos related diseases which will prove fatal.

### What are the first signs of asbestos poisoning?

The first signs of asbestos related diseases can be:

- Shortness of breath
- Persistent dry cough
- Chest tightness or chest pain
- Weight loss form loss of appetite
- A dry crackling sound in the lungs while breathing in or wheezing
- Wider and rounder than normal fingertips and toes (clubbing)

### How long do you have to be exposed to asbestos?

It can take anytime between 5-50 years to develop an asbestos lung related disease. It does depend on how many times and the duration of exposure to the fibres but is difficult to predict due to the intensity of the exposure.

### What are the first signs of mesothelioma?

The first signs of mesothelioma in the lung lining include:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- A high temperature and sweating, particularly at night
- A persistent cough
- Loss of appetite and unexplained weight loss
- Clubbed (swollen) fingertips

### What type of asbestos causes mesothelioma?

Crocidolite (Blue) and Amosite (Brown) are strongly linked with mesothelioma and is dependent on the duration and the level of exposure. Chrysotile (white) has also been linked with mesothelioma.

### Can mesothelioma ever be cured?

There is no cure for mesothelioma although treatment can help control the symptoms leading to longer term remission. The problem is the cancer is usually diagnosed at an advantaged stage when it isn't possible to remove the cancer through an operation.

### How long do you live after being diagnosed with mesothelioma?

The mesothelioma survival rate is typically 4 to 18 months after diagnosis but there have been patients who have survived for over 10 years. The current five-year survival rate is 10% and can be divided in stages 1-4.



### Assurity Consulting Limited

26 Redkirk Way Horsham West Sussex RH13 5QH  
t +44 (0)1403 269375 e info@assurityconsulting.co.uk  
w [assurityconsulting.co.uk](http://assurityconsulting.co.uk)

Registered in England and Wales Reg. No. 2227268  
Corporate Member of IWFM

# Independent Guide

## Can asbestos cause cancer?



Independent workplace compliance

### Is mesothelioma always fatal?

There is no cure for mesothelioma although treatment can help control the symptoms leading to longer term remission. The problem is the cancer is usually diagnosed at an advantaged stage when it isn't possible to remove the cancer through an operation.

### What is the prognosis for asbestosis?

The average life expectancy for people with asbestosis is about 10 years but depends on how severe the disease is and how fast it progresses.

**This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting.**

**Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 35 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.**



FS 24510

EMS 84550

OHS 590676

### Assurity Consulting Limited

26 Redkilyn Way Horsham West Sussex RH13 5QH

t +44 (0)1403 269375 e info@assurityconsulting.co.uk

w [assurityconsulting.co.uk](http://assurityconsulting.co.uk)

Registered in England and Wales Reg. No. 2227268

Corporate Member of IWFM