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Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a rare form of cancer. "Mesothelioma" is the term used to describe a cancerous tumor which involves the mesothelial cells of an organ, usually the lungs or abdominal organs.

The most common type of mesothelioma is the pleural mesothelioma. The pleura is a thin membrane found between the lungs and the chest cavity. It provides a lubricated surface so that the lungs do not chafe against the chest walls. Thus, a pleural mesothelioma is often referred to as a "lung" cancer.

Another form of mesothelioma is the peritoneal mesothelioma. The peritoneum is the membrane that encloses the organs of the abdomen. While peritoneal mesotheliomas are less common than pleural mesotheliomas, they tend to be more invasive, and may thus result in a shorter life expectancy for the patient. Mesotheliomas have also been found in the stomach and other abdominal organs.

Why Me?

A common question posed by persons afflicted with mesothelioma is, "Why did this disease develop in me?" The answer is nearly always the same-exposure to asbestos. When diagnosed in the United States, its onset is typically linked to a history of exposure to asbestos fiber. Asbestos is a mineral that was used for decades as a thermal insulation material. It has been widely known since the 1920's that asbestos is a carcinogen, which means that it causes cancer in humans. However, asbestos was used as an insulator until the mid-1970's, and is still present in massive quantities in many buildings today. Unfortunately, in many cases very little exposure is required to set this cancer in motion.

Occupations Commonly Associated With Later Development of Mesothelioma

Occupations that deal with asbestos and which are often associated with the onset of mesothelioma later in life are as follows:

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| •Insulators | •Pipe Fitters | •Plumbers |
| •Electricians | •Painters | •Plasters |
| •Crane Operators | •Floor Coverers | •Pot Tenders |
| •Welders | •Paper Mill Workers | •Custodians |
| •Steam Fitters | •Tile Setters | •Aerospace |
| •Mechanic | •Building Engineers | •Demolition Crews |
| •Former US Navy Personnel | •Packing/Gasket Manufacturin Workers | •Protective Clothing Manufacturing |
| •Rubber Worker | •Warehouse Worker | •Home Improvement |
| •Hospital | •Schools | •Loading Docks |
| •Glass Factory Worker | •Building Inspectors | •Bulldozer Operator |
| •Manufacturing Workers | •Excavating machine operators | •Heavy Equipment Mechanics |
| •Job and Die setters | •Contractors | •Building Managers |
| •Mixing Operatives | •Laborers | •Sawyers |
| •Teachers | •Tinsmiths | •Weavers |
| •Hod Carriers | •Excavators | •Technicians |

Asbestos has been used in association with a number of occupations in addition to those above. For instance, a number of former military personnel, particularly naval, came into contact with asbestos during their service. Massive amounts of asbestos were used in shipbuilding and commercial construction prior to the mid-1970's. Anyone involved with those industries is at a higher risk for developing an asbestos-related disease, including mesothelioma. Exposure may have been direct or indirect, lengthy or brief. The typical exposure period is lengthy, but some persons with short, indirect exposure to asbestos develop mesothelioma. Mesothelioma can also occur from non-occupational exposure, as evidenced by manifestation of the disease in women whose exposure came from washing the clothing of men (father, husband, son) who worked with, or around, asbestos.

A unique feature of asbestos-related injuries is the long latency period between exposure to asbestos and the onset of the injury or disease. For mesotheliomas, the latency period is between 15 and 50 years, or more. That means that a person could have been exposed to asbestos years ago, and develop mesothelioma today. The average mesothelioma latency period is approximately 35 - 40 years.

According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 3,000 new cases per year of malignant mesothelioma are being reported in the United States, and the incidence appears to be increasing. The disease is three times more common in men than in women. In men, the occurrence of mesothelioma is ten times higher in men between the ages of 60-70 as compared to men between the ages of 30-40. Occupational exposure to asbestos over the past fifty years in the United States is calculated to have occurred in approximately eight million people.

Clinical Signs of Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma symptoms can be very general and therefore they are often ignored. In most cases, symptoms for this type of cancer arise 2 to 3 months before the cancer is found. Click on the mesothelioma types below to learn about their respective symptoms.

Management of mesothelioma depends largely on the staging of the tumor. Early diagnosis and surgical intervention may lengthen life expectancy. Depending on the age and physical condition of the patient, however, surgery may not be a viable option. In addition to surgical options, radiation treatment and chemotherapy may be helpful in the overall therapeutic program. Pain management and home care are typical alternatives in the later stages of the disease.

Where Do I Go From Here?

After diagnosis, it is important to understand your treatment options. Your doctor or oncologist will provide you with information on the treatments that are available to you.

It is also important to know about your legal rights. If you have mesothelioma, or any other asbestos-related disease you were most likely exposed to asbestos. Many of the manufacturers of asbestos insulation products knew for decades that asbestos was hazardous, yet made a business decision not to warn people of those hazards. As a result, you may have a right of recovery against those manufacturers, which can help defray the costs of treatment and provide compensation for your pain and suffering.

For information on the legal implications of mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases, please [Contact Us](#).

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Mesothelioma Information Resource Group, MIRG.org, tries to assist individuals and families in learning about mesothelioma and other asbestos related injuries. It is the aim of MIRG.org to provide an account of the disease mesothelioma, its causes, various treatment options and potential legal impact. To find out more about Mesothelioma and other asbestos related diseases, new medical advances, and clinical trials now available please use the links provided.

The information on this website is presented by the Mesothelioma Information Resource Group and is for informational purposes only. No particular course of treatment is suggested. All persons are advised to consult with a medical doctor concerning treatment of mesothelioma or any illness. Also, nothing on this website is intended to constitute legal advice by a lawyer or attorney. Note disclaimer.