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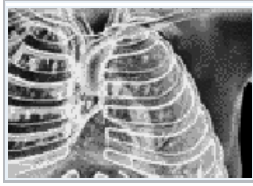
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## Mesothelioma Diagnosis

Diagnosing mesothelioma is often difficult, because the symptoms are similar to those of a number of other conditions. Diagnosis begins with a review of the patient's medical history, including any history of asbestos exposure. A complete [physical examination](#) may be performed, including [x-rays](#) of the chest or abdomen and lung function tests. A CT (or CAT) scan or an [MRI](#) may also be useful. A [CT scan](#) is a series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body created by a computer linked to an x-ray machine. In an MRI, a powerful magnet linked to a computer is used to make detailed pictures of areas inside the body. These pictures are viewed on a monitor and can also be printed.

A [biopsy](#) is needed to confirm a diagnosis of mesothelioma. In a biopsy, a [surgeon](#) or a medical [oncologist](#) (a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating cancer) removes a sample of tissue for examination under a microscope by a [pathologist](#). A biopsy may be done in different ways, depending on where the abnormal area is located. If the cancer is in the chest, the doctor may perform a thoracoscopy. In this procedure, the doctor makes a small cut through the [chest wall](#) and puts a thin, lighted tube called a thoracoscope into the chest between two ribs. Thoracoscopy allows the doctor to look inside the chest and obtain tissue samples. If the cancer is in the abdomen, the doctor may perform a peritoneoscopy. To obtain tissue for examination, the doctor makes a small opening in the abdomen and inserts a special instrument called a peritoneoscope into the abdominal cavity. If these procedures do not yield enough tissue, more extensive diagnostic [surgery](#) may be necessary.

If the diagnosis is mesothelioma, the doctor will want to learn the [stage](#) (or extent) of the disease. [Staging](#) involves more tests in a careful attempt to find out whether the cancer has spread and, if so, to which parts of the body. Knowing the stage of the disease helps the doctor plan treatment.

Mesothelioma is described as [localized](#) if the cancer is found only on the membrane surface where it originated. It is classified as advanced if it has spread beyond the original membrane surface to other parts of the body, such as the [lymph nodes](#), lungs, chest wall, or abdominal organs.

### Descriptions:

#### **Physical Examination**

An exam of the body to check for general signs of disease.

#### **X-ray**

A type of high-energy radiation. In low doses, x-rays are used to diagnose diseases by making pictures of the inside of the body. In high doses, x-rays are used to treat cancer.

#### **MRI**

Magnetic resonance imaging (mag-NET-ik REZ-o-nans IM-a-jing). A procedure in which radio waves and a powerful magnet linked to a computer are used to create detailed pictures of areas inside the body. These pictures can show the difference between normal and diseased tissue. MRI makes better images of organs and soft tissue than other scanning techniques, such as CT or x-ray. MRI is especially useful for imaging the brain, spine, the soft tissue of joints, and the inside of bones. Also called nuclear magnetic resonance imaging (NMRI).

#### **CT scan**

Computed tomography scan. A series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body taken from different angles; the pictures are created by a computer linked to an x-ray machine. Also called computerized tomography and computerized axial tomography (CAT) scan.

#### **Biopsy**

The removal of cells or tissues for examination by a pathologist. The pathologist may study the tissue under a microscope or perform other tests on the cells or tissue. When only a sample of tissue is removed, the procedure is called an incisional biopsy. When an entire lump or suspicious area is removed, the procedure is called an excisional biopsy. When a sample of tissue or fluid is removed with a needle, the procedure is called a needle biopsy, core biopsy, or fine-needle aspiration.

#### **Surgeon**

A doctor who removes or repairs a part of the body by operating on the patient.

#### **Oncologist**

A doctor who specializes in treating cancer. Some oncologists specialize in a particular type of cancer treatment. For example, a radiation oncologist specializes in treating cancer with radiation.

#### **Pathologist**

A doctor who identifies diseases by studying cells and tissues under a microscope.

#### **Chest Wall**

The muscles, bones, and joints that make up the area of the body between the neck and the abdomen.

#### **Surgery**

A procedure to remove or repair a part of the body or to find out whether disease is present. An operation.

#### **Stage**

The extent of a cancer in the body. Staging is usually based on the size of the tumor, whether lymph nodes contain cancer, and whether the cancer has spread from the original site to other parts of the body.

#### **Staging**

Performing exams and tests to learn the extent of the cancer within the body, especially whether the disease has spread from the original site to other parts of the body. It is important to know the stage of the disease in order to plan the best treatment.

**Localized**

Restricted to the site of origin, without evidence of spread.

**Lymph node**

A rounded mass of lymphatic tissue that is surrounded by a capsule of connective tissue. Lymph nodes filter lymph (lymphatic fluid), and they store lymphocytes (white blood cells). They are located along lymphatic vessels. Also called a lymph gland.

Source: <http://www.cancer.gov>

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\*For information about Mesothelioma symptoms please view our Mesothelioma Clinical Signs section [here](#).

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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.