

# Fact Sheet

- An estimated 4,000 Australians die annually from asbestos-related disease. This is double the annual road toll.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare said that at least 699 people died during 2018 from the aggressive cancer mesothelioma
- Third-wave\* asbestos exposure is still on the rise.
- In 2017 it was estimated that the third-wave currently represents one in every three new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in Australia. This number is likely to rise.
- At least one in three homes built between 1940 and 1990 is believed to contain asbestos – in some parts of Australia this rises to as many as one in two homes.
- Asbestos was used in over 3,000 products prior to 1990 – a great many of these were in residential construction and fit out.
- Asbestos was completely banned in Australia in 2003.
- Over 6,000 tonnes is illegally dumped per year.
- The World Health Organisation says there is no known safe minimum level of exposure.

Note – it is important to know that asbestos is not harmful to health when it is bonded (such as with cement compounds), is in good (non-deteriorating) condition, and is not being touched or moved in any way.

Asbestos becomes dangerous once the fibres are disturbed and can then become airborne and inhaled. This is a risk during renovations that undertake work like removal, sanding, drilling, sawing, or demolition. It is also a risk in the workplace setting due to the nature of machinery.

## Where might asbestos be found in the home?

The following list is not exhaustive, but gives you an example of the many varied locations that asbestos was used in homes during different periods between the 1940's – 1980's.

- Fibro – for home construction
- Roofs, eaves, downpipes and insulation
- Kitchen splashbacks and tilux (waterproof walls found in kitchens, laundries and bathrooms)
- Under lino, tiles and carpet
- Lagging around pipes, fuse boxes or as part of ventilation shafts
- Fences, garden sheds and small outdoor construction like chicken coops
- As part of bonded cement compounds that make up walls – disturbed when you sand for painting

## What is the third wave of asbestos exposure?

The third wave of exposure refers to exposure in the residential environment. The third-wave is largely associated with Do-It-Yourself (DIY) renovators undertaking repairs and improvements on homes without realising that they may be exposing themselves to asbestos in the process. The first wave comprised asbestos miners and manufacturers and the second wave comprised tradespeople using asbestos products.

**Asbestos lurks in more places than you'd think.**



Australian Government  
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

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