

17–23 NOVEMBER 2025

Asbestos Awareness Week

Despite the serious health risks of asbestos exposure being widely known for 80+ years, asbestos still kills up to 220 New Zealanders a year. Your actions today will prevent yourself, workers and others being harmed by asbestos related disease in the future.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the name for a group of natural minerals made up of many small fibres, which are very strong and are highly resistant to heat, fire, chemicals and wear from friction.

Why is it dangerous?

Airborne asbestos fibres are so small that they are invisible to the naked eye. When breathing in asbestos fibres, they can become embedded in the lungs and may cause diseases including lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma (a form of cancer that is always fatal).

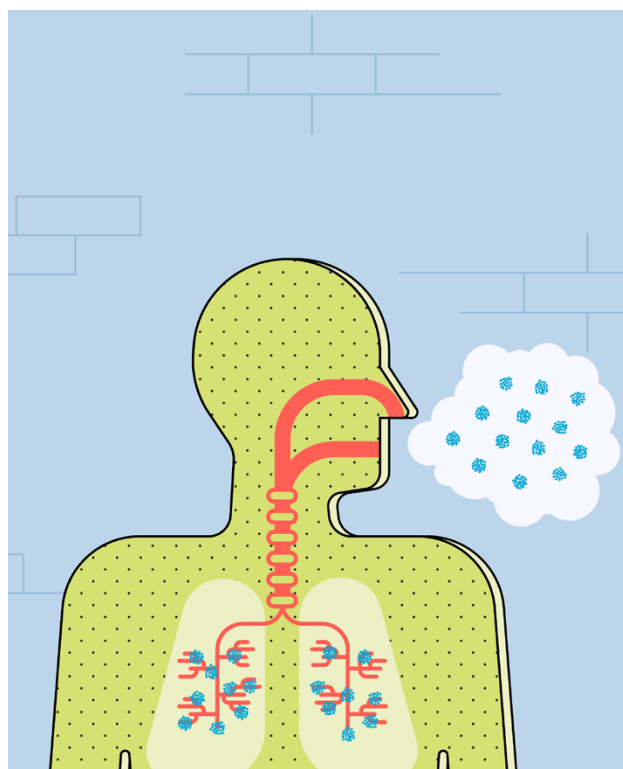
There is no safe exposure level to asbestos fibres, but health risks increase when:

- more fibres are inhaled
- exposure occurs more frequently
- exposure occurs over a long period of time.

Asbestos-related diseases may take over 20 years before symptoms appear; by this time it is too late to prevent the disease from occurring.

Where is it?

Asbestos was widely used between the 1940s and 1980s, it is very likely that asbestos containing material will be somewhere in a building this age.



Any buildings and structures built before 2000 may have asbestos in them.

Asbestos have been used in a wide range of building materials, such as cladding, roofing, flooring, electrical components and insulation material.

Asbestos products are not always obvious, and are often hidden within the building structure.

Who is at risk?

All workers completing work on buildings and structures that may contain asbestos containing material, including tradespeople, and service and maintenance workers like electricians, builders, painters, plumbers and drainlayers.

Home DIYers, residents of the building and anyone using the building are also at risk if the work on asbestos is not managed safely.

What to do?

Workplace PCBU's must make sure that exposure to airborne asbestos is eliminated, so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable, they must minimise exposure so far as is reasonably practicable.

Building renovation and demolition also disturbs asbestos containing materials. Asbestos must be identified and removed from the building before these activities can start.

If you are in control of a workplace or structure, identify where asbestos is in the building or structure and create an [asbestos management plan](#).

If you are about to start work on a building or structure, ask for the asbestos management plan.

Find out how to work on asbestos safely at: [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

Whatever you do – do not start work until the asbestos has been identified and a management plan is in place.

What do I do if the asbestos needs to be removed?

Professional and licensed removalists can do the removal.

Find licensed removalists at: [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)