

Mesothelioma: the facts

Every year around 2,500 people in the UK are diagnosed with mesothelioma, a type of cancer which is caused by exposure to asbestos.

It can take between 30 – 60 years after the exposure to asbestos for mesothelioma symptoms to develop.

People who worked in construction, manufacturing and industrial sites such as shipyards and power stations are at a greater risk of coming into contact with asbestos and of later developing mesothelioma.

FACT:

The UK has one of the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world.

FACT:

There are 43,000 deaths from mesothelioma worldwide each year according to the World Health Organisation.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural fibre which was used extensively in construction and other industries until its use was banned in the 1990s. Asbestos was mainly used as insulation and to protect buildings from fire. It can often be found in homes, schools and hospitals; in ceiling tiles and around pipes and boilers. Asbestos is dangerous when its particles become airborne and are breathed in.

Mesothelioma in the UK

Exposure to asbestos is responsible for up to

9 out of 10
mesothelioma cases



Mesothelioma is frequently listed on the death certificates of former **carpenters, plumbers and electricians**

Estimated mesothelioma death rates in the UK continue to increase – it is estimated that **90,000** people will lose their lives to asbestos-related mesothelioma by 2050



Thompsons first established the legal right to compensation for asbestos diseases

2,500

people are diagnosed with mesothelioma in the UK every year



Men who worked in construction when asbestos was widely-used or on industrial sites such as shipyards are amongst those most at risk of contracting mesothelioma



Who is at risk of being exposed to asbestos?

Asbestos was widely used in the construction industry, ship building and manufacturing and in power stations and telephone exchanges. People who worked in these types of environments such as carpenters, joiners, plumbers, ladders, engineers, electricians, pipe fitters, metal plate workers, construction workers, painters and decorators are at a greater risk of being exposed to asbestos. It is estimated that 85% of mesothelioma cases amongst men are the result of exposure to asbestos at work.

Despite being banned in 1999, asbestos may still be present in workplaces and other buildings which were built or refurbished before that date.

Mesothelioma is less common in women but is often caused by being exposed to asbestos dust carried home on the contaminated work clothing of male family members.

What is mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma is a type of cancer which is usually caused by exposure to asbestos. The most common type is pleural mesothelioma, which affects the tissues lining the lungs. A less common type is peritoneal mesothelioma, which affects the lining of the abdomen.

What are the symptoms of mesothelioma?

Symptoms of mesothelioma vary but include: chest pain or abdominal pain; a persistent cough; shortness of breath; a hoarse or husky voice; rapid weight loss; swallowing difficulties; sweating; fevers; diarrhoea or constipation; fatigue; lower back pain; nausea or vomiting and a high temperature.

Anyone experiencing these symptoms who believes they have been exposed to asbestos should seek advice from their GP, who may refer you to a hospital for tests or to a specialist.

What are the treatment options for mesothelioma?

Treatment options for mesothelioma depend on the stage of the cancer; other existing medical conditions and general fitness. Treating mesothelioma can be difficult and options vary. Where treatment is offered, it is geared towards controlling the symptoms in order to provide a better quality of life and can include: surgery; chemotherapy; radiotherapy or a combination. Treating doctors may also suggest taking part in a clinical trial, but this is something which is considered on patient by patient basis. For people with advanced mesothelioma there are palliative care options, which can relieve symptoms such as pain, weight loss and breathing problems.

You should discuss treatment options with a lung cancer specialist who can advise on what is best for you or your loved one.

What legal support is available and how can I make a mesothelioma compensation claim?

If you or someone you know has developed mesothelioma or any other asbestos-related disease you should seek legal advice from a specialist asbestos compensation solicitor. Mesothelioma claims are a very specialist area of law and you should speak to an expert.

Thompsons has a history of fighting for those who have been harmed by negligent exposure to asbestos. We won the first ever successful compensation claim in the UK for asbestos-related disease in 1972 and have been involved in every major test case since.

We have the largest and most experienced specialist asbestos teams. We are based in offices throughout the UK and routinely make home visits. In addition to any compensation, we will always advise you on other benefits or payments you may be entitled to.

I think I know where I was exposed to asbestos, but the company no longer exists – what support is available to me?

Employers are responsible for protecting their employees from exposure to asbestos. In most cases when someone has developed an asbestos disease as a result of exposure to asbestos at work, Thompsons will be able to claim compensation from employers - past and present.

Even if the employer no longer exists we may still be able to pursue a claim by tracing the employer's insurers. In cases where we are unable to trace an employer's insurer, you may still be entitled to claim under other schemes.

What support is available after being diagnosed with mesothelioma?

Your doctor or specialist nurse will be able to put you in touch with people who are there to support those diagnosed with mesothelioma. Help is available from

specialist lung cancer nurses, Macmillan or Marie Curie nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and dieticians.

You can also access information and advice from trade unions and local asbestos victim support groups. Trade unions offer free legal assistance to current union members and some unions also support mesothelioma sufferers who were a union member at the time they were exposed to asbestos. Thompsons can put you in touch with your union or former union.

My loved one has died, can I still seek legal support?

Our specialist asbestos lawyers provide legal advice and guidance to the families of people who have died from asbestos disease within the last 3 years. Even if your loved one has passed away, it is important that you seek advice without delay to ensure you don't miss out on the entitlements and benefits of compensation.

What happens next?

If you would like further advice or information please call 0800 0 224 224 to speak to an asbestos disease specialist. You can also find more information about Thompsons and the support and expertise we offer on our dedicated web hub: www.thompsonstradeunion.law/services/asbestos-diseases

Other Useful contacts

Mesothelioma UK – (the National Macmillan Mesothelioma Resource Centre) Tel: 0800 169 2409

Forum of Asbestos Victim Support Groups – Tel: 0161 363 7555

Cancer Research UK – www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/type/mesothelioma

Ask cancer nurses a question: – Tel: 0808 800 4040 (9 – 5 Mon to Fri)

NHS Choices – Mesothelioma – www.nhs.uk/conditions/mesothelioma/Pages/Definition.aspx