

## An Introduction to Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a rare, highly aggressive cancer of the mesothelium, which is a thin tissue lining covering the thoracic cavity (the pleura), the heart sac (the pericardium) and the abdominal cavity (the peritoneum). The function of the mesothelium is to support, protect and lubricate organs and body cavities.

There is concrete evidence linking the principal cause of mesothelioma to asbestos exposure. Indeed, between 70-80 percent of all mesothelioma cases are linked to excessive exposure to asbestos at work. Thus, it is typically classified as an "Industrial Disease". Asbestos is a natural, fibrous mineral with exceptional fire-retardant properties, which led to its widespread use in fireproofing buildings.

Unknown at the time of Asbestos' introduction to building materials, when disturbed or damaged, asbestos fibres are released, easily inhaled and can become permanently lodged in the lungs. Millions of people have been exposed to asbestos, meaning that the next decade at least will surely see continuing mesothelioma diagnoses. According to The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, mesothelioma in Western Europe is expected to peak between 2010 and 2020. This is due to mesothelioma taking between 20 and 30 years to develop.

The two main types of mesothelioma diagnoses are for pleural (thorax) and peritoneal (abdominal) mesothelioma. The symptoms of pleural mesothelioma include: pain in the lower back or the side of the chest, persistent coughing, developing a husky voice, weight loss and shortness of breath. Symptoms of peritoneal mesothelioma include: abdominal pain and swelling, diarrhoea or constipation, poor appetite and sickness. The problem is that these symptoms can be applied to many different illnesses, but it are particularly important to consider if the person developing symptoms has a history of asbestos exposure.

Asbestos was banned in the United Kingdom in 1999, with several lobbying organisations working towards a worldwide ban. Typically, high risk professions include: metal plate workers, vehicle body builders, carpenters, plasterers, construction workers and other construction trade-based professions. Tony Whitston of Greater Manchester's Asbestos Support Group has said: "Many believe that asbestos is a problem which was faced by shipyard workers and ladders decades ago. But asbestos is still a danger for our tradesmen today. [...] If we do not act now a whole new generation of people will develop mesothelioma in 30 years time."

Unfortunately, mesothelioma is typically diagnosed when the disease is in the advanced stages, due to a lack of symptoms, people don't go to the doctors early on. This is one of the main reasons why patients diagnosed with the cancer are often told they only have a year to live. According to Cancer Research, 10% of diagnosed patients will be alive three years later, going down to 5% survival rate after 5 years.

Surgery will not cure mesothelioma, but can help control the disease and keep the victim healthy for as long as possible. Like most cancers, radiotherapy and chemotherapy are often used in conjunction with fluid drainage (Palliative Care) programmes. Even major surgery involving removing entire lungs and the surrounding mesothelial layers cannot cure the disease. Whilst mesothelioma is terminal, many victims choose to seek action against their employers for negligence and seek to make a mesothelioma claim. This is usually successful if the victim was owed a duty of care, there was a breach of duty or workplace exposure to asbestos can be directly attributed to causing mesothelioma.

## About the Author

Jeff J endorses Daniel Taylor, who has written on behalf of Fentons Solicitors. Fentons have an experienced [mesothelioma claim](#) department, as well as handling other personal injury cases.

Source: <http://www.zogol.com>