

## Asbestos in the Home: What You Need to Know

The Dover Board of Health wants to keep residents mindful of the presence of asbestos, more particularly, asbestos in the home. We hope to help residents understand what asbestos is, where it could potentially be in your home, the health effects, and what to do about it.

### **What is asbestos?**

According to the [EPA](#), asbestos is a mineral fiber that occurs in rock and soil. In the past, asbestos was used to strengthen, insulate, and fireproof products. There are several types of asbestos, and the mineral fibers are so small that they can only be positively identified under a microscope.

### **Where is Asbestos frequently found?**

Because of the insulating properties that asbestos provides, it can be found in a variety of building materials for insulation. One particular type of insulation, **vermiculite**, is of notable concern due to it being sourced from a mine contaminated with asbestos between 1925 and 1990. If your home was built before the 1990s, it may contain vermiculite insulation.

Other places where asbestos can be found in the home include roofing shingles, ceiling and floor tiles, paper products, textured paints, patching compounds, heat-resistant fabrics, pipes coated with asbestos materials, furnaces, and door gaskets with asbestos insulation, and asbestos cement products.

### **What are the health effects of asbestos?**

Asbestos exposure can be a result of disturbing the material where it originates. Projects like demolitions, home maintenance, or renovations can disturb the fibers and release them into the air.

Exposure to asbestos can lead to issues with your lungs. Three of the major health effects associated with asbestos exposure are lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis. These conditions can be difficult to identify, a doctor may take a thorough medical history before suspecting an asbestos-related health condition. Physical examinations, x-rays, and pulmonary function tests are common screening procedures. There are also specialists who treat asbestos-caused diseases.

### **What do I do if I suspect asbestos in my home?**

Typically, the best thing to do is to leave good conditioned asbestos material alone, so not to disturb the material and release asbestos fibers into the air. There is no danger unless these fibers are released and inhaled into the lungs. Do not touch the material, but check regularly to look for signs of wear and tear, water damage, or abrasions.

If the material is slightly damaged, limit access to the area to avoid further disturbance. If it is severely damaged, contact a professional for proper repair or removal.

If you have asbestos present in your home and are planning to remodel, contact a professional for proper removal. Find a professional on [Mass.gov](#)

**How can I be sure I have asbestos in my home?**

Unless the material is labeled, there are no visual cues for identifying materials containing asbestos, according to the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#). Professionals can take samples for analysis, however, sampling can sometimes be more hazardous than leaving the material alone. When in doubt, treat the material with caution as if it contains asbestos.

## Works Cited

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