



Eco-Healthy Child Care®

Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.



Asbestos

Health Concerns

The World Health Organization and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) list asbestos as a human carcinogen, linking it to the fatal lung diseases of asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma, which can occur years after exposure. When disturbed, airborne asbestos fibers can become airborne and inhaled. Children are particularly vulnerable to asbestos because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults do.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber that has been used commonly in a variety of building construction materials for insulation and as a fire-retardant. Because of its fiber strength and heat resistant properties, asbestos has been used for a wide range of manufactured goods, mostly in building materials (roofing shingles, ceiling and floor tiles, paper products, and asbestos cement products), friction products (automobile clutch, brake, and transmission parts), heat-resistant fabrics, packaging, gaskets, and coatings. You cannot tell if a material contains asbestos by looking at it. The rule of thumb is if you are going to disturb a material that "may" contain asbestos – get it tested first.

How are Children Exposed?

Asbestos is not harmful if left undisturbed. Degraded or damaged asbestos is dangerous as it may become airborne and thus inhaled. Asbestos in homes and child care facilities can be found in: building materials such as insulation, roofing, pipes, siding, and floor tiles.

Asbestos and the Developing Child

It is especially important to protect children from exposure to asbestos, as they are still developing.

- Children breathe more rapidly than adults, thus taking in more air.
- Children who have been exposed to asbestos are more likely to develop lung diseases than exposed adults because early and long-term exposure increases the risk of lung problems.

Tips to Reduce Exposure

Unfortunately, you cannot tell if a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it, unless it is labeled.

- **If you find materials that may contain asbestos and they are intact, leave them alone.** They may not be hazardous, as material in good condition will generally not release asbestos fibers.
 - ⇒ If you find damaged or degraded materials that may contain asbestos, limit access to the area and do not touch or disturb the material.
 - ⇒ If the suspect material is damaged or if you are planning to conduct a renovation, have it sampled and analyzed by a trained and accredited asbestos professional.
 - ⇒ If asbestos is found, abatement or demolition work must be done according to the requirements of the EPA and your state or local agencies (see resources).

- Contact your local health department and notify your state child care licensing agency before you remodel.
- Ask about the presence of asbestos when purchasing building materials.
- If you have vermiculite insulation in your home, you should assume this material may be contaminated with asbestos. Be careful not to disturb it.
- There are other steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from potential exposure to asbestos-containing vermiculite. Visit the EPA's vermiculite website for more information: <https://www.epa.gov/asbestos>
- If purchasing an older building to be used as a child care facility, be sure to hire a trained and accredited asbestos professional to inspect for damaged or degraded asbestos.
- If you think you have been exposed to asbestos, contact your doctor.

Asbestos Resources

- Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR): Asbestos
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/Asbestos/
- Environmental Protection Agency: Asbestos
www.epa.gov/asbestos
- Asbestos Ombudsman: **1-800-368-5888**
- Environmental Protection Agency: Protect Your Family, Vermiculite
www2.epa.gov/asbestos/protect-your-family-asbestos-contaminated-vermiculite-insulation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13
Email: ehcc@cehn.org
Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a science-based, award-winning national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities.

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