

ASBESTOS

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.



HEALTH CONCERNS

The World Health Organization and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) list asbestos as causing human cancer, 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. Examples include: 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.

HOW IS ASBESTOS REGULATED?

The EPA attempted to ban most uses of asbestos in 1989. Unfortunately, the courts overturned the majority of EPA's rule and allowed a ban on only historic or future uses of asbestos. Existing uses were allowed to continue including: asbestos-cement, roofing, vinyl-asbestos floor tile, disc brake pads, drum brake linings, brake blocks, and roof coatings. The EPA has established regulations to reduce or eliminate exposures of asbestos in schools, emissions from industries, and from building demolition. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has also banned asbestos in products, such as textured paint and wall patching compounds.

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.

TIPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE (CONT):

- 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 trained and accredited asbestos professionals to inspect for damaged or degraded asbestos.
- If you think you have been exposed to asbestos, contact your doctor.

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

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
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
<https://www.cpsc.gov/>

