

## Key information sheet

# Asbestos



If there is asbestos in your home, it will not pose a risk unless it has been damaged or disturbed. Only by drilling or cutting asbestos are potentially harmful fibres released into the atmosphere.

### What is asbestos?

Asbestos was used as a building material from the 1950s to the mid-1980s. It was mainly used for insulation and fireproofing. It is common throughout the country, and any building built or refurbished before or during 1999 might contain asbestos.

The material is made up of many small fibres, so if asbestos is damaged, fibres or dust can be released into the air. **Asbestos in undamaged, good condition is not a hazard.**

### What are the health risks?

The fibres or dust released when asbestos is damaged or disturbed can cause serious lung diseases if they are breathed in.

The symptoms of these diseases might not appear for 20-30 years after the exposure to asbestos.

Asbestos is quite safe unless damaged or worked on.

### Where in my house could it be?

Asbestos fibres were often mixed into cement, plaster and other materials. Common places include:

- asbestos cement products (gutters, rainwater pipes, water tanks, roofing sheets)
- textured coatings (such as ceiling finishes)
- floor tiles and textiles

- sprayed coatings on ceilings, walls and beams (fire protection)
- asbestos insulation board
- pipe lagging
- loose asbestos in ceiling or floor cavity

The most likely way of damaging asbestos is through DIY work – drilling, sawing and sanding. If you are unsure if a material contains asbestos it is safer to presume it does and do not tamper with it.

### I think I have asbestos in my home.

#### What should I do?

- Don't panic
- Leave the asbestos alone
- Contact us for advice
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos containing materials yourself
- Never break up or do DIY work on asbestos containing material.

### Can I still make improvements to my home?

If you want to make an improvement to your home please contact us and let us know. We can tell you if there is any asbestos in your home, or arrange for a survey to check for it.

You must get written permission from us before carrying out any improvements or alterations in your home.

## How is the asbestos in my home managed?

If your property hasn't been surveyed, we will arrange for a professional asbestos surveying company to examine it. We ensure that any asbestos work is carried out by contractors with a special licence issued by the Government. Our contractors follow strict regulations to make sure asbestos is safely handled.

Survey priority will be given to those residents whose homes are due for significant building works to take place.

If the survey finds asbestos, there are four options. Depending on the risk, we will:

- seal off the area
- encapsulate or 'coat' the asbestos
- remove asbestos
- leave the asbestos in place with regular checks on its condition.

## How can I find out more information?

Contact us if you think you have asbestos in your home or if you would like more information.

The Health & Safety Executive website has more information about asbestos:

[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos)