



young workers:

the jobsite might be

**making you sick**

...you just don't know it yet

how to protect yourself  
from exposure to **asbestos**

**WORK SAFE BC**

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

get training  
know your rights  
ask questions  
wear the gear  
refuse  
unsafe work



#### **GET TRAINING**

You need to know if asbestos may be present at work, what the hazards are, and what safety measures (also known as controls) are in place to protect you. This needs to happen BEFORE you start work.

#### **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

You have lots of them! They range from asking questions to getting additional training when you want or need it to refusing unsafe work. Don't be afraid to demand a healthy and safe workplace. Your life could depend upon it.

#### **ASK QUESTIONS**

How will you know unless you ask? Don't be in the dark about how to stay safe and healthy at work. Ask your employer if the kind of work you do could generate airborne asbestos fibres. Ask questions until you're satisfied with the answers.

#### **WEAR THE GEAR**

There should be safety measures in place to protect you from airborne asbestos fibres. If your job requires you to wear personal protective equipment, make sure you HAVE it, that it fits properly, and that you WEAR it.

#### **REFUSE UNSAFE WORK**

No job is worth risking your life for. Listen to that voice in your head and STOP working if you feel your work might be exposing you to asbestos.

get  
training

## unseen dangers hurt, too

Sometimes the hazards on the jobsite are obvious, such as a broken ladder or an unguarded opening. But sometimes you can't even see the dangers that can make you sick.

If you do demolition or renovation work, you could be at risk of exposure to asbestos. You may not realize it because asbestos can be hidden in the building materials of a structure.

Asbestos is hazardous when it becomes airborne and you inhale the airborne fibres. Exposure, even in small amounts, can be harmful. Even if you don't feel the effects now, being exposed to these hazards when you're young and healthy can make you critically ill and even result in death 20 or 30 years down the road.

**Just think: If you're 19 when you're exposed to asbestos, you could have an asbestos-related disease by the time you're 40.**

## know and exercise your rights & responsibilities

Employers and owners/builders are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all workers. That means YOU and everyone else on the jobsite.

You have a right to know if there are asbestos-containing materials where you're working. Your employer must inform you of any hazards that may put you at risk and put controls in place to protect you. It's YOUR responsibility to follow safe work procedures. These procedures exist to protect you and your co-workers.

**DON'T START WORK** if you're not sure if there is asbestos where you're working or if you haven't been specifically trained to work with asbestos. For complete details on working with asbestos, visit [HiddenKiller.ca](http://HiddenKiller.ca).

**REMEMBER:** Your employer should, first and foremost, work to eliminate or minimize your exposure to hazards. Personal protective equipment should only be used if the hazard cannot be eliminated or controlled in some other way.

### As a young worker, you also have a legal right to:

- > On-the-job training on safe work practices, risk reduction, and emergency procedures – and extra training if you ask for it
- > Supervision to make sure you work without unnecessary risk
- > Employer-provided safety equipment required for your job (but you're responsible for your own safety footwear and headgear)
- > Say "no" to work you think is unsafe – without being fired or disciplined

## what kind of work puts you at risk?

If you do demolition or renovation work where you might disturb asbestos-containing materials, you risk exposure. These materials are often found in structures built before 1990, but may be found in newer structures as well.

### Asbestos may be present in the following materials:

- > Roof felt, shingles, and gutters
- > Vinyl tile, linoleum sheet flooring, and flooring adhesive
- > Deck undersheeting
- > Stucco
- > Loose, blown-in insulation (such as vermiculite) and batt insulation
- > Light fixtures
- > Soundproofing or decorative materials sprayed on walls and ceilings
- > Gypsum board filling compound, and patching and joint compound
- > Textured walls and ceilings
- > Window putty



# EXPOSED?

If you believe you're not properly protected against exposure to asbestos,

## STOP WORK IMMEDIATELY

and discuss your concern with your supervisor.

Don't resume work until you're sure that the hazard is under control.

If you're still unsure, call the WorkSafeBC Prevention Information Line at

**(604) 276-3100**

toll free **1 (888) 621-7233**

## What should your employer do to protect you?

If asbestos is suspected, your employer must have a qualified professional complete a hazardous material survey. An exposure control plan must also be used if you or your co-workers are, or may be, exposed to airborne asbestos fibres above 0.05 fibres per millilitre. The plan must include steps to eliminate risks or to control and reduce risks by either substituting less hazardous materials or by using engineering controls, administrative controls, or personal protective equipment. The plan must include detailed safe work procedures. All work procedures must be developed and approved by a qualified professional.

DON'T begin any renovation or demolition work unless you're sure that:

- > The hazardous material survey has been completed and is available on-site
- > An exposure control plan, if required, is being followed



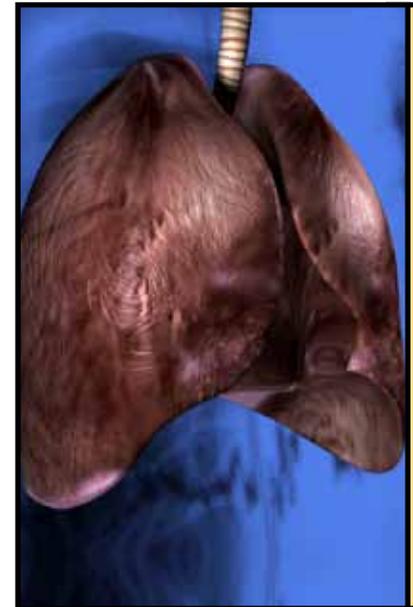
### WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU?

You may not feel the effects of exposure right away, but asbestos, once inhaled, can **permanently stay in your lungs**. Prolonged exposure can lead to asbestosis, which occurs when fibres gradually cause the lung to harden and become scarred, making it difficult to breathe. Asbestos exposure can also cause lung cancer. You may be at a higher risk for lung cancer if you smoke and you're exposed to asbestos. Mesothelioma, also linked to asbestos exposure, is a malignant form of cancer in the lining of the chest or abdominal cavity.

The severity of illness associated with these diseases can depend on the concentration of asbestos fibres in the air, the length of exposure, the size of asbestos fibres inhaled, and the frequency of exposure.

### some stuff you might not know...

- > You can be fired if you refuse to do work that you think is unsafe. **Wrong**. Even if you think something is unsafe and later discover that it's not, you have a right to raise that concern with your boss.
- > Some risks are just part of the job. **Wrong**. Hazards that can lead to an injury or disease are never acceptable.
- > It's okay if you get exposed once or twice to an occupational hazard because it's not enough to hurt you. **Wrong**. Sometimes a single exposure can hurt or even kill you. Other times small exposures can accumulate and, over time, lead to chronic illness or disease.
- > Only old people need to worry about exposure-related diseases. **Wrong**. People dying of occupational diseases today may have been exposed to harmful dusts and fibres when they were young.



## why it matters

It matters because workers are getting sick and dying. Last year, 148,000 work days were lost as a result of occupational diseases, which accounted for 2,610 claims. A majority of these were from asbestos-related diseases. Over the past five years, on average, more than 50 people have died each year from work-related asbestos exposure, which makes it the **number one occupational killer**.

**LEARN MORE** WorkSafeBC has created a website dedicated to asbestos. The site explains how asbestos is a hidden killer and offers facts to protect you, your co-workers, friends, and family from asbestos exposure. To learn more, go to **HiddenKiller.ca**.

For more on rights and responsibilities, visit the Young Worker Portal at **[www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Home.asp](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/YoungWorker/Home.asp)**.

**QUESTIONS?** E-mail **[yworker@worksafebc.com](mailto:yworker@worksafebc.com)**.

Scan the tag with your smartphone to go directly to the WorkSafeBC Young Worker Portal.

Get the free mobile app at **[gettag.mobi](http://gettag.mobi)** or search "tag reader" in the App Store.



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