

Health information for households with Mr Fluffy asbestos insulation

What is Mr Fluffy asbestos?

Mr Fluffy was a company that installed loose-fill asbestos insulation in more than 1000 houses in Canberra in the 1960s and 1970s. This material is particularly dangerous in that it is comprised of loose raw asbestos fibres which were pumped directly into roof spaces. The majority of houses have found amosite (brown) asbestos but there have been a small number of houses where crocidolite (blue) asbestos has been identified.

The Commonwealth and ACT Governments undertook a loose-fill asbestos removal program between 1988 and 1993, which aimed to remove visible and accessible loose-fill asbestos insulation from identified Mr Fluffy houses.

It is known that loose-fill asbestos insulation material remains in these houses, in areas such as internal and external wall cavities, subfloor spaces and behind cornices. In some cases, recent assessments have shown that fibres have penetrated living spaces of properties.

If you have concerns about loose-fill asbestos in your house, you are encouraged to register with the ACT Government's Asbestos Response Taskforce. You can register online at www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce or by calling Canberra Connect on 13 22 81.

What are the health effects of exposure to asbestos?

Asbestos is a health risk if inhaled. The risk of developing an asbestos related disease increases with the number of asbestos fibres a person breathes in during their life. Most people who develop an asbestos related disease have had significant exposure — that is, to either a large amount of fibres or frequent exposure to fibres.

Asbestos related diseases include:

- pleural plaques (thickening of tissue around the lungs);
- asbestosis (scarring of lung tissue);
- lung cancer; and
- mesothelioma (cancer that affects the lining of the lungs or intestine).

Asbestos related diseases can take a long time to develop after initial exposure to asbestos (i.e. usually 20 to 30 years after the first exposure).

Not everyone exposed to asbestos will develop an asbestos related disease.

What are the health risks of living in a Mr Fluffy house?

Only a qualified medical practitioner can provide a health assessment of an individual's circumstances and exposure risks. If you believe that you have been exposed to any form of asbestos, you should discuss the matter with your general practitioner.

If you have any specific health concerns or questions, please discuss these with your general practitioner.

Further information

An asbestos fact sheet is available on the ACT Health website in the publications section (www.health.act.gov.au).

Other useful information about asbestos can be found on the ACT Government's asbestos website www.asbestos.act.gov.au or Asbestos Response Taskforce website at www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce.

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