

# What Is Mesothelioma

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Mesothelioma is a malignant form of cancer that develops in the mesothelium and it strikes over 3,000 people every year. The mesothelium is the protective lining that covers most of the body's internal organs and this form of cancer attacks that lining.

The most common points of attack for this form of cancer are the outer linings of the lungs and chest cavity however it may occur in other areas of the body including the lining of the abdominal cavity and the sac around the heart.

And the attack comes from the asbestos particles or fibers that are inhaled by mine workers or process workers who work in the asbestos industry. Those same particles and fibers are also inhaled by anyone who comes into contact with asbestos that is used in insulation or building materials.

While asbestos is no longer mined except under the most stringent safety conditions what has already been mined and processed is dispersed widely in the community in the forms mentioned above. Unfortunately as the products that contain that asbestos deteriorate with age the fibers that cause Mesothelioma are released into the air that many of us are breathing.

Those particles and fibers can be taken into our lungs where they lodge and then lay dormant for years. Sometimes that dormant period can last for decades but almost invariably there comes a time when the disease awakes and begins to attack the host body.

Mesothelioma can start from just once particle and once it starts it quickly spreads, usually through the lungs. The symptoms that most sufferers display are not readily recognizable as Mesothelioma because they are common to a number of other disorders including heart problems because sometimes sufferers present with shortness of breath and chest pains.

Other symptoms can be mistaken for viral pneumonia, a persistent cough and some less common symptoms include fever, night sweats and weight loss.

In around 60% of people suffering from this form of cancer it is the right lung that is affected first. Why that should be the case is not and even less clear is the fact that around only 5% of sufferers present with the cancer showing in both lungs.

People suffering from the peritoneal form of Mesothelioma often display symptoms that include swelling of the abdomen, nausea, weight loss and bowel obstruction.

Up until now the only way of reaching an initial diagnosis was by having a chest xray and sometimes a CT scan or ultrasound may also be used however early detection may now be possible thanks to a new test developed in Australia.

This new test measures blood concentrations of certain proteins produced by the Mesothelioma cells. In clinical research the new tests and a very level of accuracy and it may be that the blood test will show conclusively whether or not a patient has Mesothelioma.