

# ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

West Virginia's main economy has consisted of coal mining, power plants, and several chemical plants, all of which have been areas noted for asbestos exposure. In addition to these occupationally hazardous locations, asbestos has been used in the construction industry in thousands of homes and public buildings.

Asbestos, a naturally occurring mineral, was fitted in nearly every home built before 1978 (asbestos was still used in construction after this date, just in smaller quantities). Generally, asbestos does not cause health problems unless its fibers are released into the air; so many homes built before the '80s in West Virginia still contain asbestos. Evidence has proven that inhaling small asbestos fibers can lead to a variety of health issues, including a rare form of cancer called [mesothelioma](#).



Friable Asbestos Cement

People of any age can develop [malignant mesothelioma](#), but most newly-diagnosed mesothelioma patients are quite old. A person with a developing case of mesothelioma may live for decades without symptoms or other obvious signs of serious illness. While this may seem like a blessing to some, it is decidedly a curse, as the long latency period associated with the disease presents a serious challenge to doctors who wish to treat mesothelioma patients. By the time a person with mesothelioma begins to show symptoms of the disease, they might be in their 70s or 80s and already living with a disease in a late stage of development. [Mesothelioma treatments](#) can include surgery, radiation therapy, anticancer drugs, chemotherapy, and other methods.

## Common Locations for Asbestos

Asbestos was used in several types of building materials throughout the state of West Virginia. Because it is fireproof and features insulating properties, asbestos was commonly used in ceiling and floor tiles, insulated electrical wiring, the HVAC system, wall and attic insulation, wall boards, and roofing materials. Products that contain asbestos are not easy to identify on sight, and it is generally understood that if your home was built prior to 1978, you should assume that it contains asbestos building materials to some degree.



Asbestos Roofing

If you are concerned that your home contains asbestos building materials, you can hire an experienced and licensed asbestos abatement contractor or home inspector for an assessment. Depending on the material, they may be able to tell by visual inspection whether a building product contains asbestos. This, however, is not a foolproof method. The only sure way to know if your home contains asbestos is to have professionals collect samples of the building materials. The samples are sent to a laboratory where testing will verify asbestos contamination.



Professional Asbestos Abatement

### Hire a Professional

There are a variety of professionals available for asbestos abatement in West Virginia. Whether you want to remove the [asbestos-containing materials](#) completely, or choose to cover them in some way, a licensed professional offers safety and security, as removing asbestos on your own is exceptionally hazardous. Hiring a licensed contractor provides peace of mind and may protect you and your family from exposure to the deadly microscopic asbestos fibers. Professionals can perform air quality tests before, during, and after the remediation process—both in the contaminated part of the home as well as other areas. Air monitoring can be particularly reassuring if your family is living in the home during abatement.

Information provided by

**[Mesothelioma Cancer Center](#)**

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