

This fact sheet is for residents whose tenancy was previously managed by Link Housing. For more information, please visit our new website: linkwentworth.org.au

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fibre. In the past, asbestos was mixed with cement to make it stronger and easier to mould into different shapes and sizes, such as fibro sheeting. Asbestos was also popular because of its fire resistance and insulation qualities.

Is asbestos dangerous?

Asbestos in fibro sheeting can present a health risk if the sheeting is cut or sanded, causing the physical release of the asbestos fibres. This material is considered safe if it is left undisturbed and is in good condition. Asbestos fibres, when inhaled, can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma.



Notice the dimple pattern on the asbestos fibro when compared to modern non-asbestos Hardiflex

The risk of contracting these conditions increases as the amount of asbestos fibres inhaled increases. People who get health problems from inhaling asbestos have usually been exposed to high levels of asbestos over a very long period of time, such as people who have worked in asbestos mines or who have been employed in the production of fibro sheeting.

Is it still used to build or repair DCJ homes?

No. Since 1986, asbestos has been banned for use in building products in NSW. Fibro sheeting that may contain asbestos is still present in many homes, built before 1986. It was usually used as wall cladding, in eaves and in wet areas such as bathrooms and laundries. Modern fibrous cement sheeting uses cellulose fibres instead of asbestos fibres and is considered a safe building material.

Am I in any danger?

The long-term risks of living in a home which contains asbestos products is extremely small relative to other risks experienced in everyday lives. It is very important to realise that there are very low levels of asbestos in the air that we breathe while going about our day-to-day lives.

What do I do if I suspect there is asbestos material in a home?

A significant number of the homes built before 1986 could contain some form of asbestos cement, irrespective if they are public housing or privately owned homes. If you think asbestos may be in your home, don't panic! If asbestos material is in good condition, and is left alone, it is harmless. Generally, material in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless fibres are released and inhaled into the lungs.

If the area you suspect has asbestos in it starts to show signs of wear or damage, such as tears or abrasions, contact Link Wentworth on 9412 5111 and report it. A Link Wentworth Technical Officer will then come to your home as soon as possible and inspect the area, and possibly take a sample. If material contains asbestos, Link Wentworth will ensure it is either rendered safe or removed. The residential tenancy agreement signed by you at the beginning of your tenancy states that you are not to alter your home in any way without the permission of Link Wentworth. This includes cutting into walls, drilling holes, making repairs and so forth. If you inform Link Wentworth that you

are seeking permission to do work on your home that might include disturbing fibro sheeting, Link Wentworth will ensure your home is inspected and tested where required.

What do I do if I think I have been exposed to asbestos dust?

Don't panic. The first thing is to make sure you are not exposed to any more dust. Call Link Wentworth immediately. If you are worried that you have inhaled dust that may contain asbestos, it may be advisable to see your doctor for peace of mind.

What should I do if I or someone else accidentally has created a hole in some fibro sheeting?

Make sure everyone at your home stays clear of the area and contact Link Wentworth. A contractor will come around as soon as possible and make sure the area is safe, and may take a sample for testing. Remember, your safety comes first. Any matters as to who should pay for the repairs if you, your children or a friend has caused the hole can be dealt with at a later date.

Are contractors trained to deal with asbestos?

All of Link Wentworth's contractors must abide by WorkCover NSW regulations when they handle or move asbestos matter. This means they must be licensed to work with asbestos.

Can I transfer out of my home because I think it has asbestos?

No, you cannot transfer into a new property because of the presence of asbestos in the property. Due to the age of Link Wentworth's properties many of them are likely to contain asbestos. As long as the area is left undamaged it is safe to remain in the property. If the area becomes damaged a Link Wentworth contractor can ensure the area is repaired to ensure safety. Due to the large number of former and current public housing properties built prior to the late 1980's, Link Wentworth has taken the initiative to inform our clients about living in properties which may contain asbestos components.

I have been drilling holes in my walls to hang pictures. Should I do this?

No. While the possibility of this having any effect on your health is minimal, the slight chance still exists. Please contact Link Wentworth before drilling holes in cement sheeting.

If I find cement sheeting lying on the ground or under my house, what should I do?

Don't touch it. Report it to Link Wentworth, who will organise it to be removed by qualified asbestos handlers.

What do I do if an older house with fibro is being demolished next door?

WorkCover and NSW Health say that living next door to a house with fibro is only a problem when the fibro sheeting is broken or disturbed. There are some things that neighbours can do to minimise any risk during demolition works. You can:

- ask the contractor how long the demolition will take
- note the phone number of the foreman in charge of the demolition and call him if there are any problems
- close your windows and doors that face the property being demolished to prevent dust getting in
- check that the property is securely fenced to prevent access by the public
- make sure that all asbestos cement is removed from the demolished site.

If you need more information, please contact Link Wentworth on 9412 5111 or email enquiries@linkwentworth.org.au. Or go to the WorkCover NSW website: workcover.nsw.gov.au

Do you need a translator? TIS National provides access to phone and on-site interpreting services in over 150 languages. Call 13 14 50. linkwentworth.org.au