

This fact sheet has been developed to provide you with information about asbestos and how to safely live with it in your home.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fibre. In the past, it 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 asbestos fibres. 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 the more you inhale asbestos fibres. 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 have been employed in the production of fibro sheeting.

If fibro sheeting containing asbestos is kept undisturbed and is in good condition, it is considered safe.

Is it still used to build or repair 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. See image above to tell the difference between asbestos fibro and modern Hardiflex material.

Am I in any danger?

The long-term risks of living in a home that contains asbestos products is extremely small, relative to other risks experienced in everyday life.

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

A significant number of homes built before 1986 contain some form of asbestos cement, irrespective if they are social housing or privately-owned homes. If you think asbestos may be in your home, there is no need to 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 there is an area in your home that you suspect has asbestos in it and it starts to show signs of wear or damage, please contact Link Wentworth on **13 14 21** and report it. A Link Wentworth Technical Officer will come to your home as soon as possible, 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 tell 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?

The first thing is to remove yourself from the area and make sure you are not exposed to any more dust. Call Link Wentworth immediately. 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.

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 and we will organise for 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
- Make sure that all asbestos cement is removed from the demolished site.