



# Asbestos in the home

**Your safety is important to us, so we want to explain why and what you can do if you are concerned about asbestos. This leaflet gives information on how Hounslow Housing manages asbestos in its properties and what we are doing.**

## INTRODUCTION

Asbestos has been widely used in a variety of building products due to its unique properties, which include its strength, stability under extreme heat or cold and resistance to chemicals and electricity.

There are three main types of asbestos which have been used commercially:

- Crocidolite (blue asbestos)
- Amosite (brown asbestos)
- Chrysotile (white asbestos)

Some of these products were used in the building industry and one was still in use up until 1999, when it was finally banned. Buildings built prior to 2000 are likely to contain some kind of asbestos product. Once the risks to health were realised, controls were gradually introduced and the import of all asbestos is now banned in the UK.

## WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which has been mined and processed to produce thousands of different products. In its raw form it looks like small rock fragments but the milling process mixes it with other compounds, making it almost impossible to identify by just looking at it, the only sure way of knowing is by having it sampled and analysed.

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH HAZARDS?

The extensive use of asbestos means it is impossible to avoid exposure to asbestos completely because there is a very low background level of fibres in the atmosphere, however there is no evidence to suggest that exposure to such low levels are detrimental to health. The physical presence of asbestos does not necessarily create a health risk, the risk arises from breathing microscopic asbestos fibres that are released through damage or mishandling.

Asbestos fibres enter the body through the nose and mouth, they cannot be absorbed through the skin and the body naturally removes any asbestos fibres that you might take in with food and water. Asbestos dust can cause asbestosis, mesothelioma and certain types of cancer, for which there is no cure.

All asbestos must therefore be considered to be potentially dangerous, although people who have not worked directly with it are extremely unlikely to develop a related disease. There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos, but there is no doubt that people who work with asbestos materials are at much greater risk than those who have never worked with it. The risk to health in the home environment is therefore slight.

## WHERE ASBESTOS MAY BE IN THE HOME?

The list below gives an indication of where asbestos may be in the home, but does not show all possible uses and locations of asbestos materials.

### Exterior of building

- Garage and shed roof sheets
- Gutters and downpipes
- Facia and soffits
- Some roofing felts
- Composite roofing tiles
- Cladding
- Communal service ducts
- Ceiling panels
- Palisade floor tiles
- Boiler flue pipes
- Wall hung tiles/cladding

### Interior of building

- Textured coatings
- Bath panels
- Service ducts
- Door linings
- Door header panel
- Door footer panels
- Water tanks
- Electric fuse boards and switch gear
- Toilet cisterns
- Floor tiles
- Sink pads
- Some interior workings of boilers
- Boiler flue pipes
- Panel behind radiators
- Underside of stairs
- Rope behind fire places
- Pipe lagging

If there is asbestos in your home and if it is in good condition, the best advice is to leave it undisturbed.

**THE DANGER ONLY OCCURS WHEN IT IS DAMAGED.**

## AM I AT RISK?

Asbestos can only pose a risk to health if the fibres become released or airborne. You are not at risk if asbestos products are undisturbed or undamaged.

In good condition, asbestos is not a health hazard. If items do become damaged or deteriorate, then you and others may be at risk from asbestos fibres in the air.

DIY activities such as drilling or sanding may disturb and possibly damage products containing asbestos.

Do not put yourself at risk, instead seek advice before carrying out any significant work. If you are not sure contact **Hounslow Housing** repairs call centre on **020 8583 2000** or email to [repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk)

## FIRE PROTECTION

Buildings are designed to stop temporarily the spread of fire and smoke by creating fire resistant compartments. These compartments often were made by asbestos containing materials prior to 2000.

Please contact the Hounslow Housing team prior to disturbing the fabric of the building for advice as you may release asbestos fibres and also remove the protection against fire and smoke spread.

## WHAT IS HOUNSLOW HOUSING DOING?

Before Hounslow Housing undertake any improvements or major repairs to your home we commission an asbestos survey which is carried out by independent UKAS accredited surveyors.

The purpose of the survey is to identify if there is any asbestos within your home, and if it represents any risk. We will advise you on the appropriate action we need to take should the survey reveal asbestos is present.

The survey data will then be uploaded into our asbestos database to be stored for future reference and works. When asbestos is found to be damaged or may be disturbed during planned or future works, it will be removed by trained specialised contractors. Should asbestos need to be removed from your home you will be notified accordingly.

Removal may take several hours and require the affected part of the house to be sealed off during the removal. If asbestos is removed from your home and disposed of, please be assured that it is no longer a problem.

**IF ASBESTOS IS FOUND TO BE IN GOOD CONDITION AND POSES NO RISK IT WILL BE LEFT IN PLACE.**

## PLEASE LET US KNOW

If you suspect that asbestos containing materials are damaged in your home or you suspect them to have been fly tipped, please contact the repairs call centre on **020 8583 2000** or email [repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk)

## HOME OWNERS & LEASEHOLDERS

Home owners and leaseholders are responsible for any asbestos in their homes and are strongly advised to take sensible precautions and use the links below for the best advice on carrying out DIY work on asbestos.

Always remember, if you cannot identify the material, then presume it is asbestos and seek professional advice.

## FOR INFORMATION OR ADVICE

<http://www.asbestoswatchdog.co.uk/home>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm>

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