

Title:

Who is at risk from mesothelioma cancer?

Word Count:

379

Summary:

Mesothelioma is a deadly cancer which is fairly rare although in the last few decades the number of people who have died from it have dramatically increased. Mesothelioma is caused by exposure to asbestos without sufficient protection. When a person is exposed to asbestos, he or she inhales tiny asbestos fibres which are suspended in the air.

Keywords:

mesothelioma, cancer, asbestos, pericardial, peritoneal, pleural, malignant, symptoms, treatment

Article Body:

Mesothelioma is a deadly cancer which is fairly rare although in the last few decades the number of people who have died from it have dramatically increased. Mesothelioma is caused by exposure to asbestos without sufficient protection. When a person is exposed to asbestos, he or she inhales tiny asbestos fibres which are suspended in the air. These fibres pass into the respiratory system and end up becoming lodged in the lungs. An accumulation of asbestos fibres in the lining of the lungs like this can cause nearby cells to deform and eventually leads to what is known as pleural mesothelioma. Accumulation of asbestos fibres in the peritoneum (lining of the abdomen) can lead to peritoneal mesothelioma and build up of fibres around the tissue of the heart can cause pericardial mesothelioma. Asbestos fibres reach these places over time or because they have been transported there by the lymphatic system.

Mesothelioma has a very large latency period (time between getting the cancer and feeling the symptoms of it). This period is usually between 30 - 50 years and so a person who bears mesothelioma is unlikely to know that they have got it. This is why mesothelioma is so hard to diagnose in its early stages because it shows no symptoms and the few symptoms that it does show such as wheezing and shortness of breath are typical of far more common diseases such as pneumonia. The likelihood of being cured depends largely on how early and how aggressively the cancer is treated. If it is treated when it has fully developed and matured then it is extremely difficult to cure.

In this way, those at risk are those who have worked amongst asbestos.

Construction workers, asbestos manufacturers or those who have lived within a mile of an asbestos factory are the people who have the largest contact with asbestos. Those who are in contact with these people are also at risk because asbestos fibres can stick to clothes and hair. The majority of people who are discovering that they have mesothelioma are elderly men of about 60 - 70. This was the generation which worked with asbestos a lot without sufficient protection. Many of these men are now lodging multi million dollar lawsuits against the companies who exposed them to the dangers of asbestos.