



## What you need to know about...

### MESOTHELIOMA

#### **What is Mesothelioma?**

Mesothelioma is a form of cancer. It is a rare disease in which malignant (cancerous) cells are found in the linings of the chest cavity/lung (pleura) or the abdomen/abdominal organs (peritoneum). Although it is a rare form of cancer, there are about 2,000 to 3,000 new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in the United States each year. It is seen more often in men than women.

#### **What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is the name given to a group of fibrous minerals that occur naturally in the environment. Asbestos minerals are heat and chemical resistant, and can be separated into threads that are easily breakable into small airborne particles that can then be inhaled, swallowed or stick to clothing.

Asbestos is used in a number of products utilized by the construction and shipbuilding industries. Most exposure to asbestos takes place in the workplace. Individuals that work with insulation, roofing and building materials; brakes and clutches (automotive repair) and in railroads and steel mills are at risk for asbestos exposure.

The diseases that result from asbestos exposure include asbestosis, pleural abnormalities, mesothelioma and lung cancer.

#### **Who is at risk of getting Mesothelioma?**

Those that work or live in places where there is high exposure to asbestos are most at risk. Of those diagnosed with mesothelioma, 70%-80% have been exposed to asbestos. There is also some evidence that those who live with asbestos workers may be at risk for developing mesothelioma because of asbestos dust being brought home on clothing and other items.

#### **What is the treatment for Mesothelioma?**

Treatment of the disease depends on the stage of the cancer, the patient's health and age. Treatment options include surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy, or a combination of these.

#### **What research is being done for treatment of Mesothelioma?**

Research is being conducted to determine the role of a virus that may contribute to the development of mesothelioma. Research is also being done to study the body's immune system and the effects of some biological agents to boost the immune system. Ongoing clinical trials are taking place to study treatments for the disease.

For more information about mesothelioma, please visit:

- Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ASTDR), [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/)
- National Cancer Institute [www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/malignantmesothelioma/](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/malignantmesothelioma/).