

# ASBESTOS

**ADVICE FOR RESIDENTS**





This leaflet provides information about asbestos in the home and within shared or communal areas.

It tells you what asbestos is, where you might find it, why it may be a problem and what steps you need to take if you think you have asbestos in your home.

Please take the time to read this information and keep this leaflet in a safe place as you may need to refer to it again in the future.

## What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a fibrous mineral that was commonly used in building materials between the 1930s and 1980s. The word “asbestos” comes from an ancient Greek word, meaning “inextinguishable”.

It was mined from rock and milled into fibres that are extremely strong and resistant to heat and chemicals and was used to insulate buildings. Asbestos has been banned from use in the construction of new buildings since 1999.

## What does asbestos look like?

It is impossible to tell which products contain asbestos without examining them in a specialist laboratory. Materials that contain asbestos look exactly the same

as materials that do not contain asbestos.

## Why was asbestos banned?

When materials that contain asbestos become damaged or deteriorate, the fibres are released into the air.

Fibres can also escape into the air when you are carrying out DIY or maintenance work such as drilling, cutting or sanding material that contains asbestos and may create dust. The fibres can be breathed in and can lead to an asbestos-related lung disease. It can take 15 to 60 years between breathing in asbestos and having any problems.

Medical research suggests that people who have been exposed to asbestos as part of their job (for example plumbers, carpenters, electricians) are more likely to suffer an asbestos-related disease than those who have lived in a building where there is asbestos.

**You will not be at risk if there is asbestos in your home and you do not damage or disturb it.**

## Is everyone exposed to asbestos?

There are low levels of asbestos fibres everywhere in the air as it was used so widely in building

materials in the past. However, this is unlikely to damage your health as the human body can cope with asbestos at these low levels.

## **Where might there be material that contains asbestos in my home?**

You would usually find asbestos in areas such as:

### Outside of buildings

- Corrugated and flat roofing sheets, tiles and roofing felt
- Soffit boards
- Cladding panels
- Rainwater guttering and downpipes from the 1960s and 1970s

### Inside of buildings

- Sprayed coatings which protect against fire on structural steel beams from the 1960s and 1970s
- Decorative textured coatings (Artex or similar finishes) from the 1960s and 1970s
- Duct panels
- Infill panels above, below and next to windows and doorways
- Panels behind radiators and heaters
- Some vinyl floor tiles from the 1960s and 1970s
- Underneath staircases

### Other areas or items

- Fire safety items such as fire blankets from the 1960s and 1970s
- Bath panels
- Water tanks and lids from the 1960s and 1970s
- Boiler flue pipes
- Pipe lagging from the 1960s and 1970s
- Storage radiators
- Toilet cisterns
- Under-sink pads from the 1960s and 1970s

### Household equipment

- Ironing board stands
- Seals on cooker doors

If you have household equipment items (such as those listed above) from the 1960s and 1970s we would suggest that you replace them.

## **What are we doing to manage asbestos?**

As a landlord we are legally responsible for managing asbestos in our properties.

We have an asbestos register which tells us where we have identified asbestos in our properties and where we think asbestos may be.

We employ a specialist surveyor to regularly undertake surveys

and take samples of suspect materials as part of an ongoing inspection programme. From time to time we may write to you to ask for access to your home in order to carry out an asbestos survey.

The information gathered during these surveys allows us to keep our register up to date and helps us support you in managing asbestos within your home.

### **What are the risks if I find a material which contains asbestos in my home?**

The advice from the Health and Safety Executive says that if a material that contains asbestos is in a good condition and you do not disturb it, there is very little risk of fibres escaping into the air.

In most cases, if asbestos is found in your home it will put you at a very low risk. As long as the material which contains the asbestos is in good condition, not split, cracked or flaking, it is best to leave it alone.

If you see that a material which contains asbestos, or you suspect a material to be asbestos that is damaged, please call Axis on Freephone **0800 783 2768**.

Axis will check the asbestos register and can arrange a visit to test the material to see if it contains asbestos. If we find

asbestos we will tell you what action we need to take.

### **What if I am a leaseholder?**

If you are a leaseholder, under the conditions of your lease you are responsible for all fixtures and fittings within your home, including floor coverings and ceiling decorative finishes such as Artex.

If you need help to investigate any material you think contains asbestos, you can use our Leaseholder Repairs Service. If you use this service you will be responsible for paying the costs. For more information, please phone Axis on Freephone **0800 783 2768**.

### **How should I carry out DIY or any decorating safely if I think my home contains asbestos?**

Here are some tips for carrying out DIY and decorating safely:

Do

- Treat asbestos with respect
- Soak wallpaper before you remove it or use a steam stripper and gently peel away the paper before you decorate
- Use plaster to skim over Artex ceiling coatings to create a flat surface, or simply paint over the surfaces

Don't

- Don't drill, saw, sand or disturb any material which may contain asbestos
- Don't try to remove textured wall or ceiling coatings
- Don't try to remove old floor tiles. Leave them in place, put new coverings over the top and secure them with double sided tape
- Don't vacuum or sweep any pieces of material you think may contain asbestos. If you find any broken pieces of material, keep the area wet by covering it with a damp cloth. You should phone Axis on **0800 783 2768** and they will collect the material and dispose of it.

## Where can I find out more information?

If you have any general concerns, you have a question about asbestos, or you think you have a material which contains asbestos in your home, please phone the Partnership Compliance Team on **0300 303 2500**.

Or you can write to: **The Partnership Compliance Team, Swan Housing Association, Pilgrim House, High Street, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9XY.**

If you would like more information, visit the Health and Safety Executive's website at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos)

## Our Asbestos Policy Statement

As a responsible social landlord we understand the possible risks linked to asbestos. We accept that we are responsible for reducing, as far as possible, the risk of asbestos.

We keep to recommendations issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Health and Safety Executive.

We will leave asbestos as it is, unless:

- it is damaged
- it may be disturbed; or
- we can remove it easily during our improvement programmes.

We will continue to update our asbestos register and monitor any material we know contains asbestos.

We will carry out a risk assessment on the materials to see which we must give priority to, when we monitor it and when to remove it.



# SPEAKING YOUR LANGUAGE

Please call us on **0300 303 2500** if you would like someone to explain this leaflet to you

## Polish

W razie potrzeby wyja nienia któregokolwiek z artykułów, prosimy do nas zadzwoni pod numer 0300 303 2500.

## Somali

Fadlan naga soo wac  
0300 303 2500 haddaad  
jeclaan lahayd in qof uu kuu  
sharaxo mid kasta oo kamida  
qodobadan.

## Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੇਖਾਂ  
ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ  
ਵਿਸਤਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਦੱਸੇ ਤਾਂ ਵਿਰਧਾ ਕਰਕੇ  
ਸਾਨੂੰ 0300 303 2500 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

## Bengali

যদি চান অন্য কেউ আপনাকে এই  
আটিকেলগুলি বুঝিয়ে দিক তাহলে দয়া  
করে আমাদেরকে 0300 303 2500  
নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।

## Arabic

إذا كنت ترغب بأن يقوم شخص ما  
هذه المواد لك، فيرجى الاتصال  
بتفسير بـ 0300 303 2500

## Urdu

اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ ان میں سے کسی مضمون کی وضاحت  
کی جائے تو براہ مہربانی ہم سے فون نمبر  
0300 303 2500 پر رابطہ کریں۔



[WWW.SWAN.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SWAN.ORG.UK)