

Wollen Michelmore

SOLICITORS

ASBESTOS DISEASE: THE SILENT KILLER THAT STILL SURROUNDS US

It's been illegal for decades, but asbestos is still embedded in our homes, hospitals, schools, offices and shops and it's predicted that asbestos related deaths will not peak until 2020.

Before legislation was tightened in the early 1980's and finally banned in 1999, asbestos was widely used in public places and was known for its great insulating and flame retardant properties. Many will not know that they have even come into contact with it and may never suffer any ill effects. Others may not however be so fortunate and between 15 to 60 years after exposure symptoms can suddenly appear.

Asbestos was often used in industry. Ship building, house building, telephone exchanges, power stations, the manufacturing of household appliances, and the motor industry to name just a few. And statistics show that asbestos related illnesses affect five times as many men than women because they were more frequently exposed to asbestos during their employment, often dating back to before the 1950's. Exposure can also occur through secondary exposure through the washing of clothes or coming into contact with asbestos on overalls or similar.

Asbestos is made up of tiny fibres. These can be inhaled and can cause damage to the lungs. In the most serious conditions they can irritate the Pleura and can cause gene changes that lead to the growth of cancer. Exposure can cause a number of different conditions which include, Pleural Plaques, Asbestosis, Diffuse Pleural Thickening and the most serious fatal condition, Mesothelioma. Most of the conditions start with the onset of unexplained breathlessness and it is extremely important to be aware of such symptoms if you have had some previous exposure.

Mesothelioma is becoming more common with over 2000 people being diagnosed in the UK each year. It does not usually develop until 40 years after exposure which is why there is a current peak in the diagnosis of the condition from exposure before the 1980's. Other asbestos related illnesses are also at a peak and it's important to be aware of symptoms.

Despite the exposure taking place many years ago there are provisions in place for victims to be able to pursue a claim for compensation against the employer or organisation that caused the exposure. There are however time limits in place from the date of the asbestos diagnosis so it's important to seek advice about making a claim as soon as possible.

Brigit Nolan is an Associate Negligence Lawyer FCILEx specialising in Personal Injury and is recognised by APIL as a Senior Litigator for her expertise in this area. Her cases range from road traffic accidents, accidents at work, disease claims, product liability and trips and slips and falls.

If you would like to know more about this article or require any personal injury advice please contact Brigit Nolan, on 01803 213251 or Brigit.Nolan@wmlegal.co.uk