

The Dangers of Asbestos Exposure

1. 1.3 million American workers face exposure to asbestos.
2. Asbestos is the commercial name for minerals whose fibers have useful properties.
3. Asbestos is found in buildings and in automotive applications such as brake linings.
4. When inhaled, microscopic particles of asbestos can cause asbestosis - a condition in which lung tissue becomes scarred.
5. Asbestos can also cause lung cancer and mesothelioma, a form of cancer that attacks the lining of the chest and abdominal cavity.
6. Symptoms can take many years to develop.
7. The OSHA standard defines strict exposure limits, requirements for asbestos exposure testing and asbestos medical surveillance, record-keeping, "competent persons," regulated areas and training.

Related Examinetics Services

- [Periodic Asbestos](#)
- [Respirator Fit Test - Qualitative](#)
- [Respirator Fit Test - Quantitative](#)
- [Standard Respirator Clearance](#)

The Need for an Asbestos Medical Surveillance Program

Asbestos fibers can break down into microscopic particles that find their way into the body through inhalation or swallowing. Ingestion of asbestos fibers can cause severe health issues including lung cancer, gastro-intestinal cancer and mesothelioma (cancer of the chest lining and abdominal cavity). Inhalation of asbestos fibers can also cause asbestosis, a condition in which scarred lung tissue makes it difficult for oxygen to enter the blood. All of these conditions can take a long time to appear, a fact that makes asbestos exposure testing all the more important. In general, the greater the exposure to asbestos, the greater the risk of developing lung disease. The risk is exacerbated by smoking.

Because of its known health risks, asbestos is tightly regulated. In order to comply with regulations, employers in the construction industry should implement asbestos exposure testing and familiarize themselves the Asbestos Standard as outlined in OSHA 3096. The Asbestos Standard is too comprehensive to adequately summarize here. It defines strict exposure limits and requirements for asbestos exposure testing, administering an asbestos medical surveillance program, record-keeping, "competent persons", regulated areas, hazard communication and training.

These requirements are explained on the OSHA website at www.osha.gov/SLTC/asbestos. The website offers a downloadable, interactive compliance tool known as *The Asbestos Advisor 2*. The tool provides general guidance, individual project guidance, a glossary of terms, answers to frequently asked questions and detailed text of the relevant regulations regarding as.

The US Environmental Protection Agency maintains a list of the laws and regulations pertaining to your asbestos medical surveillance program at www.epa.gov/asbestos. Training is a significant requirement for anyone working with asbestos, and the EPA website offers a comprehensive resource relating to types of training and accredited training providers. Given the need for repeated asbestos exposure testing, including chest x-rays, many organizations find mobile health screening services a more efficient and less disruptive way to maintain compliance and data management.