



Mesothelioma Patients:

Get the answers you need



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Overview

Whether you were recently diagnosed with mesothelioma or have known about your illness for some time, the information in this booklet is designed to help you and your family navigate this difficult journey.

What You Need to Know

Mesothelioma is a complex, fast-moving disease. This booklet provides patients with concise information they need to make smart decisions.

What You'll Find in This Booklet

Within these pages are such topics as what to expect in the weeks and months following your diagnosis, how to find the best care possible, and practical, “how to” advice on questions to ask your doctor. You’ll find these questions on page 6. We recommend bringing this booklet with you to your next doctor’s appointment. We will also introduce you to the important process of pursuing a mesothelioma legal claim.

We hope this information will prove invaluable to your overall health and well-being. If you need help right away, please call one of our highly trained mesothelioma paralegals at 855-373-2424.



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Understanding Mesothelioma

What it is, how you got it, and what you can do about it

If you're like most patients, you probably hadn't even heard the word "mesothelioma" before you were diagnosed. That's not surprising, given that there are only about 3,200 documented new cases of this aggressive cancer each year in the United States.

What is mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma is a rare type of cancer occurring in the lining — or mesothelium — of the lungs, abdomen, or heart.

There are three main types of mesothelioma:



Pleural (lungs)



Peritoneal (abdomen)



Pericardial (heart)

Pleural mesothelioma is the most common type and accounts for roughly 75% of all cases.

It can take years, even decades, for mesothelioma symptoms to develop. And sometimes those symptoms can be easily mistaken for those of common illnesses such as a bad cold or flu.

How did I get mesothelioma?

Most medical and scientific experts agree that exposure to asbestos is the *only* way people can get mesothelioma.

Prior to 1980, asbestos was commonly used in many everyday products, such as floor tiles, wallboard, and insulation. Its durability and heat resistance made it especially ideal for use on ships and in other places where fire was of great concern. Asbestos was even used in Hollywood movies as a substitute for snow.

However asbestos is used, and in whatever product, any damage or disturbance to the tiny asbestos fibers can cause them to become airborne. These fibers may be inhaled or swallowed and become lodged in a person's lungs, abdomen, or heart. Over time, mesothelioma, lung cancer, or asbestosis could develop.

It's hard to believe that hundreds of companies manufactured thousands of asbestos-containing products. Many of these companies continued to distribute these products even after discovering the dangers of asbestos. Some companies actually hid this critical information from their workers, the public, the government, and the U.S. military. As a result, millions of Americans were exposed to harmful asbestos-containing products without their knowledge. Years later, many of the people who had been exposed started getting sick and dying from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases.

By the 1970s, thousands of lawsuits against manufacturers of asbestos-containing products began to flood the court system. In an effort to protect their ill-gotten profits, many of these companies tried to walk away from their responsibilities by filing for bankruptcy protection instead of compensating the people harmed by the deadly products they knowingly sold.

Thankfully, both lawyers and the courts stood up to these companies on behalf of the victims. The courts ordered these companies to put money into trusts that would pay the victims and families who were impacted by the asbestos-containing products they manufactured before they would be protected from future lawsuits. More than 55 companies have established these court-ordered trusts. To date, approximately \$30 Billion has been placed into these trusts, and that amount is expected to grow.

What should I do if I am diagnosed?

After you are diagnosed with mesothelioma, you should start to think strategically. Here are some important questions to consider: How can I get the best care possible? Which medical centers offer the most advanced treatment options? Who can I count on to be part of my support network? How will I pay for my medical bills? Do I have any legal rights related to my diagnosis? Your primary care physician and the specialist who diagnosed your illness can be great resources. You should learn everything you can about this disease. The more you know, the more you'll be ready to make the best possible treatment choices for *you*.

Helpful resources for patients:

- Cancer.gov
- Cancer.org
- Curemeso.org

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Setting Expectations

What type of doctor should I see immediately after my diagnosis?

Patients diagnosed with mesothelioma are typically referred to a mesothelioma specialist. Once the specialist has completed all the necessary tests to confirm the diagnosis, he or she will recommend a course of treatment. There are four stages of mesothelioma, each calling for a different type of treatment. A Stage 1 diagnosis indicates that the tumors are small, localized and have not spread. At stages 2 and 3, the cancer has spread beyond the original location and has either grown into the lung or other nearby organs, but still remains on one side of the body. Stage 4 is the most advanced phase of mesothelioma, in which the cancer has spread and may be present on both sides of the body. Treatment options may include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or a combination of procedures. There are more treatment options available for mesothelioma if it is detected in its earlier stages.

You may want a second opinion

Mesothelioma is a complex disease, so your specialist or insurance company may recommend getting a second opinion. This is a smart step to take. A confirmed second opinion will give you more confidence in your medical team's recommended course of action.

It may be possible to enroll in a clinical trial

The specialist may also recommend you enroll in a clinical trial or research study. By doing so you will have the benefit of receiving new types of treatment, while also having the satisfaction of knowing you're helping other patients like you by participating in cutting-edge medical research.

Planning for treatment

Depending on your doctor's recommended plan, you can expect treatment to last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. After treatment is complete and you are well enough to be released from the hospital, you should be able to live at home and return to the hospital or doctor's office for any follow-up procedures.

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Finding the Best Care Possible

Mesothelioma treatment “Centers of Excellence”

Mesothelioma is a complex and rare disease that requires unique treatment. Only about 3,200 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with mesothelioma each year, so it is not guaranteed that your local medical facilities will have much, if any, experience treating this disease. It is in your best interest to work with a specialist who has considerable experience treating your specific type of mesothelioma.

Finding a mesothelioma specialist

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) at the National Institutes of Health (cancer.gov) has designated certain hospitals across the country as NCI-designated cancer centers. These 68 hospitals hire top faculty and have leading research programs and treatment facilities. To be an NCI-designated cancer center, a medical facility must offer world-class, state-of-the-art programs in multidisciplinary research.

Most of these NCI-designated cancer centers are associated with a university. In addition, *U.S. News & World Report* recently published its annual ranking of top cancer care facilities.

Sokolove Law has created a guide to Mesothelioma Centers of Medical Excellence. To request a free copy, call 855-373-2424.

In addition to the National Cancer Institute and *U.S. News & World Report* recommendations, explore these trusted resources:

The Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation (MARF) has a medical liaison on staff to help patients find the specialist best suited to meet their needs. MARF is a nonprofit organization, and this service is free. Call **877-363-6376** or visit **www.curemeso.org**

The American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) offers a list of accredited cancer diagnosis and treatment centers. There are more than 1,500 CoC-approved cancer centers across the U.S., including major treatment centers and community hospitals. The CoC is constantly monitoring these institutions to ensure that they continue to offer the highest-quality cancer care. See the full list at **www.facs.org**.



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Must-Ask Questions for Your Doctor

A checklist to bring to your next doctor's visit

If you are diagnosed with mesothelioma, you will likely have many questions. Most doctors recommend you bring a close friend or family member to medical appointments to take notes and help you keep track of information.

To help you take an active role in your healthcare, we recommend bringing our must-ask list of questions below to your next doctor's visit. We encourage you to add your own questions to this list.

- Based on what you know about my cancer so far, what is my prognosis?
- What are my treatment options?
- What can I expect from the treatment?
- Should I get a second opinion? If so, can you recommend another specialist?
- Where do you recommend I go for treatment?
- What are the risks of the treatments you suggest? Do the benefits outweigh these risks?
- Do I have a choice about whether to accept certain forms of treatment?
- What kinds of side effects can I expect?
- How will I know if my side effects are normal or require immediate medical attention?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life?
- Are there steps I should take to get ready for my treatment?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- Will my health insurance cover the cost of treatment?
- At what point should I consider participating in a clinical trial?
- Will I be able to care for myself during treatment?
- Will I have to stay in the hospital or cancer facility while I am being treated, or will my family be able to take care of me?
- Will I be able to resume my normal activities, such as going to work, exercising, and participating in my hobbies?
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Sharing the News

How to talk about mesothelioma with both children and adults

There is no way around it: it is difficult to share the bad news of a mesothelioma diagnosis with friends and family. But you may find that preparing for and having these important conversations will bring some sense of relief.

Mesothelioma is a rare disease and the word itself is very scientific-sounding — it can be intimidating and difficult to explain to others what is happening to you. It helps to simplify the language. For example, you could say that mesothelioma is a type of cancer that developed in your body over a long period of time because you were exposed to asbestos. Your conversations will vary depending on whether you're speaking with adults, teenagers, or younger children, and on their relationship to you.

These tips from the National Cancer Institute will ensure that conversations about your illness with friends and family are thoughtful, productive, and helpful for everyone.

Speaking with young children about your diagnosis

Young children will not fully understand the seriousness of your illness or the potential consequences.

- Keep your tone simple and loving.
- Explain that you have a sickness in your body, but don't offer many details.
- Reassure children that they are not at risk of "catching" the disease from you, and that you will always love them.

Mesothelioma is a type of cancer that develops in a person's body over a long period time after he or she has been exposed to asbestos.

Speaking with teens about your mesothelioma diagnosis

Older children are often smarter than adults give them credit for. The tone you take with them will not differ substantially from that you would take with an adult.

- Tell them that you've been diagnosed with mesothelioma.
- Tell them what the disease is and how you got it.
- Say that you plan to fight this disease as hard as you can, but be honest about your prognosis. There is no point in trying to shield them from the facts—and you can bet that their next step will be to go online to research the disease to find their own information.

Speaking with adults about your mesothelioma diagnosis

Whether speaking with family members or friends, expect that they will have many questions.

- Explain what mesothelioma is and how it is linked to exposure to asbestos at some point in your past.
- Share details not only about your course of treatment, but also your prognosis.
- Let them know how they can help and be involved in your care.
- Promise to keep them updated on your progress.

End every conversation, no matter the age of your audience, by saying that you are always willing to answer any follow-up questions.



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Making Your Home Safe & Comfortable

Making your home an accident-free space during and after treatment

Once you begin mesothelioma treatment, you may need to rely on a wheelchair or walker. You may also need to use a portable oxygen tank. To make sure you can safely move around your home, ask family members and friends to help make some extra space by moving furniture and clearing hallways. Checking that each room is adequately lit, so you can see where you're going, is also a smart step toward creating a safer home. Here are a few more tips to consider:

- Add a rubber threshold ramp at every doorway. These are inexpensive and can be cut to size.
- Rent or buy a chair with a built-in lift that raises and lowers the seat.
- Install bed rails to ease the difficulty of getting in and out of bed.
- Install a second stairway railing so there is one on either side of the stairs for extra support.

The bathroom can be an especially dangerous place for someone in a weakened condition. Try these quick fixes:

- Place a plastic seat right in the shower.
- Install a rubber bath mat or rubber treads inside and outside the shower.
- Use carpet tape or other heavy-duty tape to keep the bath mat outside the shower from slipping.
- Install an elevated toilet seat with armrests.
- Install a handrail or grab bar in the shower to help with balance.
- Add nightlights in bathrooms and along hallways that lead to them.



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Creating Your Support Network

Finding helpful resources

Research shows that patients who regularly participate in support groups have an improved quality of life. The simple act of connecting with others who are going through or who have gone through similar experiences may help lift your spirits and minimize the feelings of sadness and isolation you may have following your diagnosis.

There are several different types of support groups. Some meet weekly in hospitals, libraries, or community centers; others have regular “meet ups” in online chat forums. Some organizations, such as the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation (MARF), offer support groups through Facebook. There are dedicated support groups for patients, for caregivers, and for family and friends, and some groups are a combination of all of the above.

Support group resources

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)

Share your story online to raise awareness about the dangers of asbestos while also uniting with other patients and families for prevention and support.

www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org/community/

American Cancer Society's Online & Support Communities

Join an online support community for cancer patients and family members.

www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/onlinecommunities

CancerCare

Find an online, telephone, or face-to-face support group for cancer patients and their families.

www.cancercare.org/support_groups

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation support groups

Connects patients and their families to online and telephone support groups.

www.curemeso.org | 703-879-3820

Check with your medical care team as well as your local community center and places of worship for additional listings of support groups in your area.

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Legal Support for Mesothelioma Patients and Their Families

If you have been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you and your family may be entitled to financial compensation. Compensation usually comes from the manufacturers of the asbestos-containing products that caused your disease. This money can often help to cover the high costs of medical care and make up for other lost funds.

Many companies knew the dangers of asbestos but continued using it in their products, putting profits ahead of people. It is your right to try to hold these companies accountable. Choosing the right law firm can help you navigate the complicated legal claims process and get the most from your case.

At Sokolove Law, we are advocates for our clients and are here to serve you. We are a trusted mesothelioma law firm with more than 40 years of experience pursuing asbestos-related claims.

Sokolove Law is the first truly national law firm with an office and a licensed attorney in nearly every state. Our Founder Jim Sokolove's passion and commitment to providing legal access and public service has helped bring justice and compensation to over 7,000 victims of asbestos-related diseases and cancers.



Our staff of experienced mesothelioma lawyers and paralegals is a team of trained professionals who are here to understand your unique situation and answer any questions you might have about filing a mesothelioma lawsuit.

To learn more, contact one of our highly trained mesothelioma paralegals at **855-373-2424**. There are often time limits associated with these claims, so it is important to act quickly.

Why Choosing a National Mesothelioma Law Firm Is Important

At Sokolove Law, we are not limited to filing mesothelioma claims in certain states. As a national law firm, we will file wherever your mesothelioma or asbestos-related claim can be best litigated, maximizing the value of your case.

Frequently Asked Questions About Mesothelioma Lawsuits

How long might my case take?

Whether or not your case goes to trial, it is crucial for you to act quickly. While some courts recognize the burden that mesothelioma places on families and try to expedite trial dates, not all do. The sooner you decide to move forward with your case, the sooner you and your family can achieve peace of mind. In addition, some state laws limit the time you have to file a claim, and if time runs out, you will not be able to file a claim, ever.

How will I pay for a lawyer to represent me?

Typically there are no up-front or out-of-pocket costs required to work with a mesothelioma attorney. Instead, most lawyers will agree to take only a percentage of the settlement if they recover money on your behalf, in addition to being reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses processing your claim. This is standard practice for these types of cases and is referred to as “working on a contingency basis.” It means that the lawyer is not paid unless you receive compensation from your case. You may also choose to hire a lawyer who charges an hourly fee. Because this option can be very expensive, most people find the contingency fee arrangement to be easier and more affordable.

Will I have to testify at trial?

Our mesothelioma attorneys prepare each case to go to a trial. But some mesothelioma cases settle out of court, which means there is no trial. If your case does go to trial, our mesothelioma lawyers aim to make this process as easy as possible.

Can I pursue compensation even if I don't know where I was exposed to asbestos?

Generally speaking, the answer is yes. If you're unsure about where you may have been exposed to asbestos, you are certainly not alone. In fact, because most mesothelioma patients were never warned about the dangers of asbestos, many need help tracking down and verifying the source of their exposure.



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Social Distancing while Receiving Mesothelioma Care

Prior to the outbreak, an at-home caretaker was likely used to hosting visitors — family, friends and people from within their local communities. That all changed as the nation took necessary social-distancing measures to protect people's health and safety. Here are a few tips for helping you and your visitors stay safe.

- Talk to a doctor before allowing visitors.** Because each case of mesothelioma is different, a patient's medical team will know how best to ensure the patient's safety. A doctor may recommend virtual visits continue for a time before agreeing to allow in-person visitors.
- See if testing can be done at your home.** For standard medical treatments or procedures, such as drawing blood, monitoring vital signs, making medical assessments, or administering medication, skilled visiting nurses may be able to safely come to your home.
- Reintegrate your support network slowly.** Ideally, patients and their caregivers should follow state isolation guidelines as well as their physician's guidance regarding visitors. However, before allowing visitors and caregivers to start visiting again, identify whom among them is symptom-free and has taken necessary quarantine measures. Limit your visitors to this small group.
- Stick to the CDC's COVID-19 recommendations.** All visitors, including family members, should strictly adhere to the CDC's COVID-19 safety recommendations, which include social-distance measures, wearing a mask or face covering and washing one's hands frequently. For the most recent recommendations visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/).
- Take care of your mental health.** Patients and caretakers may experience feelings of anxiety and depression during this historically difficult time. Make sure to share these feelings with family, friends and physicians.
- Go to the hospital in an emergency.** Patients and caretakers may still face mesothelioma-related and non-mesothelioma-related emergencies. Continue to seek immediate medical attention for any urgent medical needs, including chest pain, abdominal pain, any signs or symptoms of a stroke and, of course, any complications related to your mesothelioma diagnosis.
- Communication is critical for hospital stays.** If the patient does need to be hospitalized and visitors are restricted, it is important the caregiver establish good communication with the patient's health care providers regarding the patient's treatment and health status.



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Resources for Mesothelioma Patients, Friends & Family

Travel and Transportation

Because this disease is so rare, your local hospitals may not have experts on staff. You may need to travel far from home to receive treatment from one of the leading cancer centers (refer to Cancer Centers of Excellence in section 4 for more information).

Fortunately, there is financial assistance available to help patients and their families pay for travel and lodging. This assistance is supplemental and is not given in place of a potential mesothelioma case settlement.

Travel

The American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery

Can provide local rides to doctors' appointments for patients who do not have their own transportation.
www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/road-to-recovery

Corporate Angel Network

Can arrange free travel on corporate jets for cancer patients.
www.corpangelnetwork.org | 914-328-1313

Mercy Medical Angels

Can offer assistance for patients and families who cannot afford to travel for treatment.
www.mercymedical.org | 888-675-1405

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

Can offer up to \$1,000 for travel to receive an expert consultation on a mesothelioma diagnosis, through its grant program.
www.curemeso.org | 703-879-3820

Lodging

Contact these organizations to find comfortable lodging for you and your family that is offered free or at greatly reduced rates.

The American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge

Has 31 locations throughout the U.S. offering free lodging near cancer treatment centers.
www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/hopelodge/index

The American Cancer Society's Lodging Program

Connects patients and their families with places to stay during treatment.

www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/patientlodging/index

Joe's House

Lists various types of lodging throughout the U.S. near hospitals and treatment centers.

www.joeshouse.org

Financial

CancerCare Co-Payment Assistance Foundation

This nonprofit organization is dedicated to helping patients afford co-payments for chemotherapy and targeted treatment drugs.

www.cancercarecopay.org | 866-55-COPAY

Patient Access Network Foundation

This independent organization is dedicated to providing people with chronic or life-threatening illnesses access to breakthrough medical treatments.

www.panfoundation.org | 866-316-7263

Patient Services Incorporated

This organization provides a "safety net" for patients with chronic illnesses struggling to pay insurance premiums and co-payments.

www.patientservicesinc.org | 800-366-7741

Veterans Disability

This organization provides compensation for veterans with disabilities related to military service.

www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/compensation

Mesothelioma Advocacy Organizations

These nonprofit organizations are dedicated to advocating for the rights of asbestos victims and are working hard to raise money to find a cure for asbestos-related diseases.

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

This national organization is dedicated to finding a cure and eradicating mesothelioma as a potentially life-ending disease.

www.curemeso.org

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)

ADAO is dedicated to preventing asbestos-caused diseases through national and international education, advocacy, and community initiatives.

www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org

