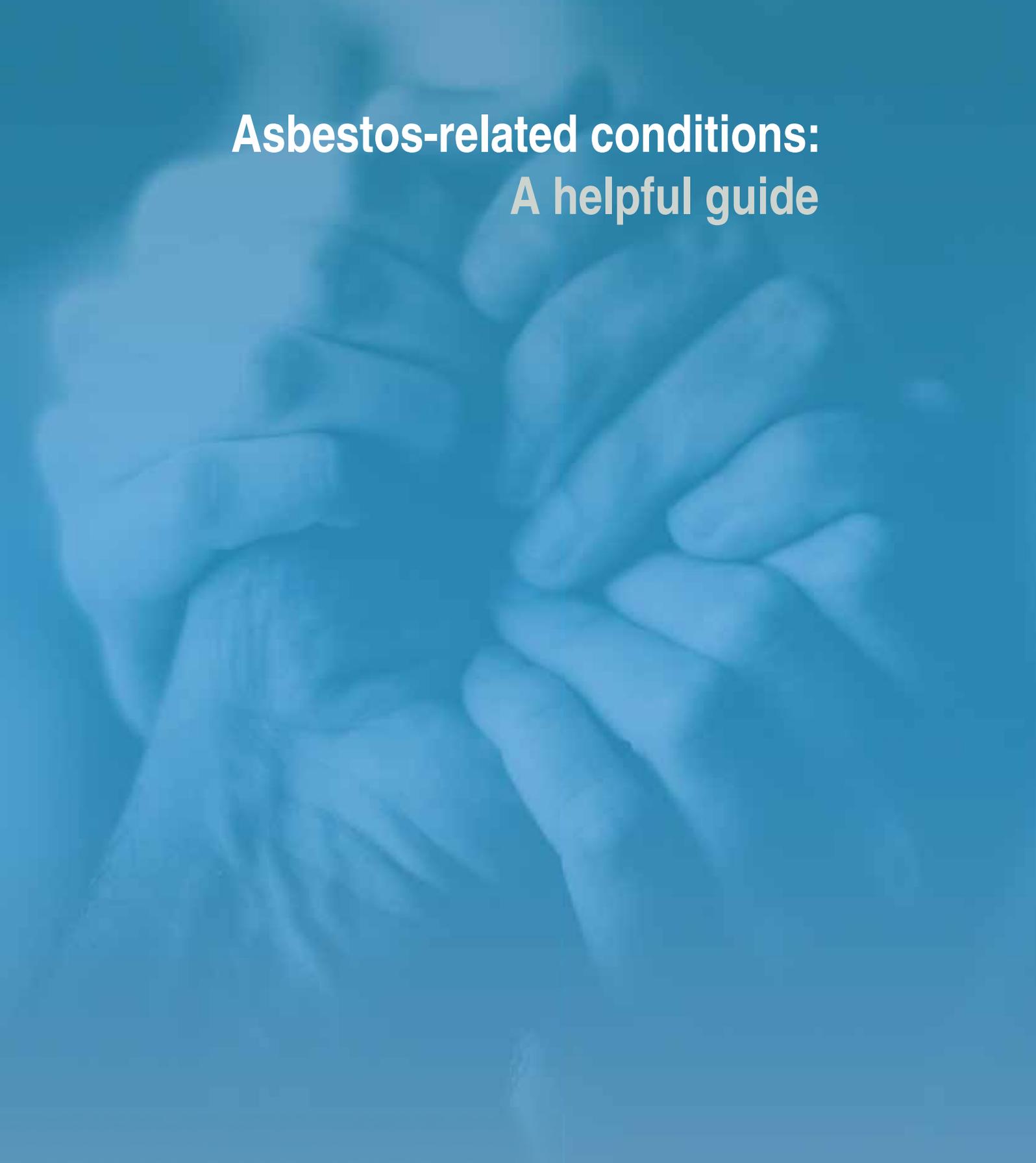


AsbestosAction



Asbestos-related conditions: A helpful guide

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ASBESTOS-RELATED CONDITIONS

Pleural plaques

Pleural plaques are a scarring of the outer lining of the lung and are caused by exposure to asbestos. They are not dangerous and in nearly all cases, do not cause any symptoms.

Asbestosis

Asbestosis is a chronic lung disease caused by prolonged exposure to asbestos. The primary symptoms include decreased tolerance for physical exertion and shortness of breath.

Pleural thickening

Pleural thickening, also known as diffuse pleural thickening (DPT), is a lung disease in which extensive scarring thickens the thin membrane that covers the lungs. It may cause breathlessness.

Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is an asbestos-related cancer affecting the lining of the lungs, abdomen (peritoneal mesothelioma) or testicles. Unfortunately mesothelioma can be very difficult to treat as it is often found when it is advanced.

Asbestos-related lung cancer

Asbestos-related lung cancer is cancer of the lungs which has been caused by exposure to asbestos dust. It is very difficult to establish that the lung cancer has been caused by asbestos exposure.

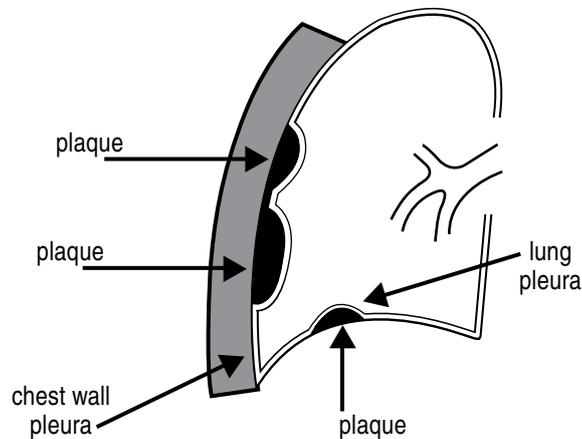
MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

There are sadly many types of asbestos-related diseases. They range from those that cause few if any symptoms to those that are fatal. The most common asbestos-related diseases are:

Pleural plaques

What is it?

Pleural plaques are the most common indication of exposure to asbestos. Characterised by areas of fibrous thickening on the lining of the lungs (pleura) or diaphragm, the condition typically arises 20 to 30 years after asbestos exposure. The plaques can calcify over time, but they do not cause long-term health problems.



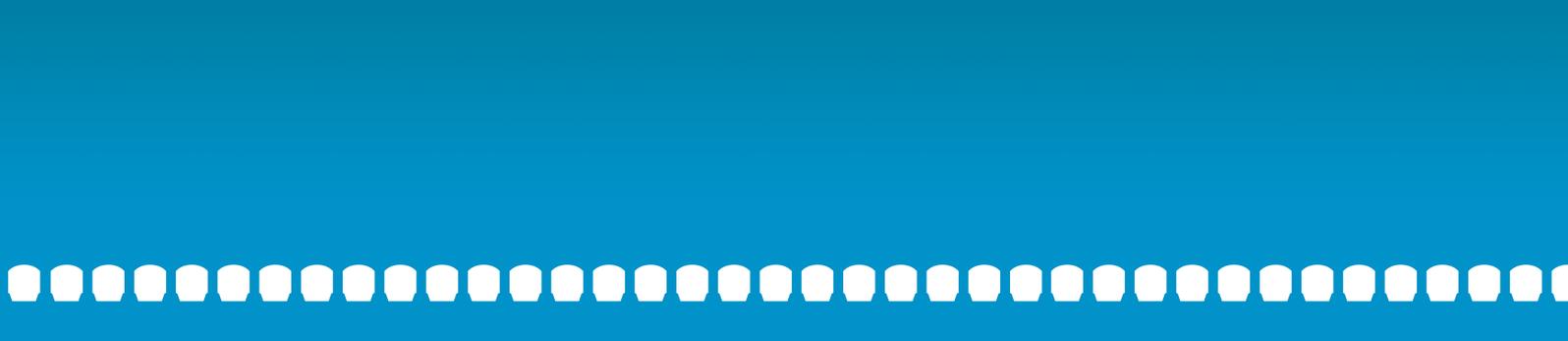
Pleural plaques are benign, which means they are not cancerous. Furthermore, they cannot become cancerous over time. In nearly all cases, there are no symptoms.

Pleural plaques are almost exclusively caused by exposure to asbestos, but having the condition does not necessarily mean that you will develop a more serious asbestos-related disease like asbestosis or mesothelioma. However, because the presence of plaques suggests a significant past exposure to asbestos, they do indicate an increased risk that mesothelioma or lung cancer may arise later in life.

What causes it?

When people are exposed to asbestos, inhaled fibres can accumulate in the lining of the lungs and irritate the lung tissue. However, it is unclear exactly how asbestos fibres cause pleural plaques to develop.

In five to 15 per cent of cases, pleural plaques become calcified. As calcium deposits build up in them, the scar tissue hardens. Rarely, calcified pleural plaques can inhibit lung function and cause patients to have trouble breathing.



How is it diagnosed?

Doctors typically diagnose this condition using a chest X-ray or CT scan. Because pleural plaques rarely causes symptoms, they usually find signs of it incidentally after performing an imaging scan for an unrelated reason.

Treatment

Because pleural plaques are non-cancerous and the majority of patients do not experience a loss in lung function, treatment is not necessary.

Although this condition may not place you at a higher risk of developing a more serious asbestos-related disease, you should always notify your doctor if you experience symptoms like breathlessness, a persistent cough, chest pain or coughing up blood. If breathing does become an issue, your doctor can perform a variety of treatments and refer you to a specialist.

Asbestosis

What is it?

Asbestosis is a chronic lung disease characterised by a scarring of lung tissues, which leads to long-term breathing complications. The disease does not have a cure.

What causes it?

It is caused exclusively by exposure to asbestos, but may not be diagnosed until decades after the exposure occurred.

Exposure occurs when someone breathes in the dangerous fibres. Extended exposure can lead to an accumulation of the fibres in lung tissues, setting the stage for long-term fibrosis (scarring). Over time, lung tissues thicken, causing pain and restricting breathing.

Symptoms

The primary symptoms are decreased stamina for physical exertion and shortness of breath. The severity of the symptoms is often related to the amount and length of asbestos exposure. Doctors prescribe breathing treatments, prescription medication and sometimes surgery for people with asbestosis.

The prognosis is often positive. Because asbestosis is not a form of lung cancer or mesothelioma, people can live many years, even decades, with the disease. However because the condition gets worse over time, patients will require increased treatment as they age.

How is it diagnosed?

When diagnosing asbestosis your GP will first ask about your symptoms and listen to your lungs with a stethoscope (a medical instrument used to listen to the heart and lungs). If your lungs have been affected by asbestos, they will usually make a crackling noise when you breathe in. Your GP will also ask about your work history, particularly about periods when you may have been exposed to asbestos, how long you may have been exposed, and whether you were issued with any safety equipment, such as a face mask, when you were working.

If asbestosis is suspected, you will be referred to a specialist in lung diseases for tests to confirm any lung scarring. These may include:

- a chest X-ray – to detect abnormalities in the structure of your lungs that could be caused by asbestosis

- a computerised tomography (CT) scan of the lungs – which produces more detailed images of the lungs and the membrane covering the lungs and can help identify less obvious abnormalities
- lung function tests – to assess the impact of damage of the lungs, determine how much air your lungs can hold and assess how well oxygen crosses the membrane of the lungs into your bloodstream.

Before confirming a diagnosis of asbestosis, the chest specialist will also consider and rule out other possible causes of lung inflammation and scarring, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Treatment

There is no cure for asbestosis, as the damage to the lungs is irreversible. However, you can take steps to reduce your symptoms and improve your quality of life.

Not smoking

If you have been diagnosed with asbestosis and you smoke, it's very important to stop as soon as possible. Smoking can make your symptoms of breathlessness worse and significantly increase your risk of developing lung cancer at a later stage.

Vaccinations

If you have asbestosis, your lungs will be more vulnerable to infection.

It's recommended that you have the influenza vaccination to protect against flu and the pneumococcal vaccination to protect you from the bacteria that can cause serious conditions such as pneumonia. Your GP can arrange for you to have these vaccinations.

You will need the flu vaccine every year to ensure you stay protected. Most people only require one dose of the pneumococcal vaccine, although additional booster shots may be recommended if your general health is poor.

Long-term oxygen therapy

If you have severe asbestosis your body may not be getting all the oxygen it needs to function properly. Oxygen therapy may be recommended if you have low levels of oxygen in your blood.

Oxygen therapy is supplied through a machine called an oxygen concentrator, which purifies oxygen from the air in the room and produces a more oxygen-rich supply of air.

Pleural thickening

What is it?

Pleural thickening, also known as diffuse pleural thickening (DPT), is a lung disease in which extensive scarring thickens the pleura (the thin membrane that covers the lungs). As the scar tissue grows it can encase the lung and close off the space between the lungs and pleura. The condition, one of the most commonly diagnosed signs of asbestos exposure, may cause chest pain and a significant impact on breathing.

What causes it?

Although the cause and severity of the condition can vary, it is often the result of prolonged exposure to asbestos. When we inhale asbestos fibers, they can become embedded in the pleura. There, the fibers can trigger an inflammatory response that causes the progressive build up of fibrous scar tissue.

Pleural thickening does not always signify an asbestos-related disease. A number of other factors can cause the disease.

Symptoms

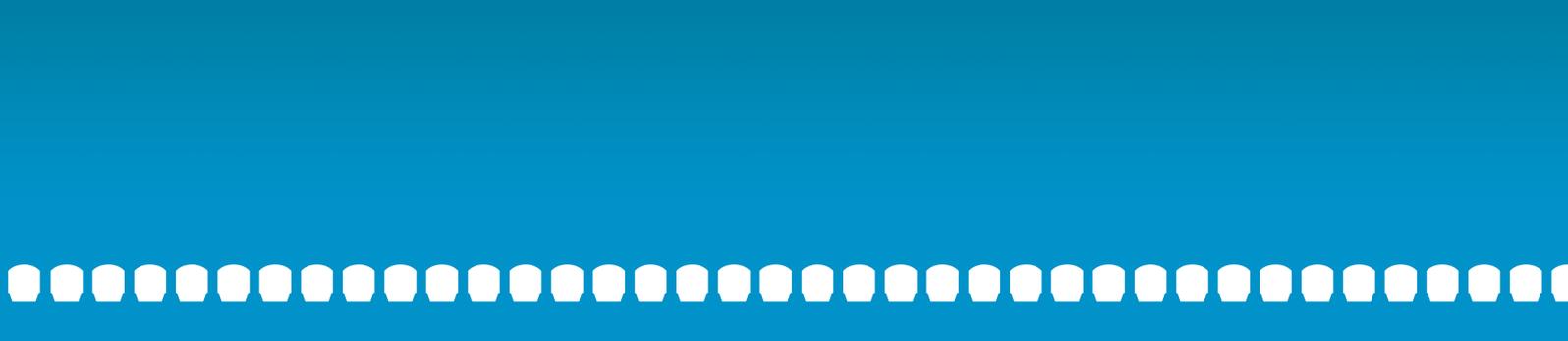
In its earliest stages the condition has no symptoms. As the disease progresses patients may experience chest pain and breathlessness.

It can also cause restrictive lung disease which prevents the lungs from fully expanding. As a result, patients experience decreased lung volume and may struggle to breathe.

How is it diagnosed?

There are a number of tests doctors can use to diagnose the condition. On an imaging scan of the chest, pleural thickening appears as an irregular shadow on the pleura that extends over at least 25 per cent of the chest wall.

The condition is most commonly diagnosed via chest X-ray, but diagnosis by CT scan is becoming increasingly popular. Numerous studies have established that when compared to X-rays, high resolution CT scans can better detect pleural thickening, pleural plaques and asbestosis.



Treatment

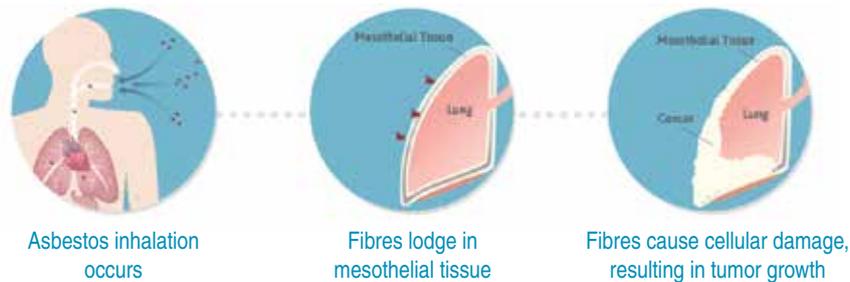
While the damage is irreversible, there are some treatment options available. Most commonly, doctors offer therapies to treat the symptoms. They can prescribe pain medications such as bronchodilators, steroids and antibiotics that make breathing easier.

Smoking can lead to decreased lung function so health care professionals recommend patients stop smoking if diagnosed with pleural thickening. By quitting, patients may also reduce their risk of developing more serious lung diseases.

Mesothelioma

What is it?

Mesothelioma is an asbestos-related cancer affecting the lining of the lungs, abdomen (peritoneal mesothelioma) or testicles. It is usually caused by exposure to asbestos dust - when a person breathes in asbestos fibres, these can work their way into the pleura, the membrane which protects the lungs from damage by the ribs during the act of breathing. The asbestos fibres can damage the pleura's cells and can cause changes which, it is thought, make them into cancerous cells.



Around 200 people in Scotland are diagnosed with mesothelioma each year

What causes it?

Mesothelioma can be caused by relatively low exposure to asbestos dust but the higher the level of exposure, the higher the risk of developing mesothelioma.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of pleural mesothelioma are:

- Pain in the lower back or the side of the chest
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating and high temperatures
- A persistent cough
- Losing more than 10% of your weight when not dieting
- Difficulty swallowing
- A hoarse or husky voice.

Some people have changes in the shape of their fingers and nails called finger clubbing, but this is not common.

How is it diagnosed?

Mesothelioma is most often diagnosed after a person goes to a doctor because of symptoms. If there is a reason to suspect you might have mesothelioma, your doctor will use one or more tests to find out.

Imaging Tests (X-Ray, CT, PET, MRI)

Imaging tests are used to obtain images of the inside of the body. Tests like, x-rays, CT scans, PET scans and MRIs are commonly used to diagnose mesothelioma.

Blood Marker Biopsy

Doctors use a variety of blood tests to determine if cancer is present in patients. Doctors can also analyse the type of cancer and what treatment options work best for each patient.

Surgical Biopsy

A biopsy is a tissue or fluid sample taken from a tumour or its surrounding area. These samples are examined under a microscope to determine cell type and is the only way to definitively diagnose mesothelioma.

Treatment

Unfortunately mesothelioma can be very difficult to treat as it is often found when it is advanced. Nearly all treatment is aimed at controlling the mesothelioma for as long as possible and keeping symptoms under control.

It is not unusual for patients to have chemotherapy treatment to shrink the tumour and reduce symptoms. Radiotherapy may also shrink the cancer and help manage symptoms.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is an aggressive mesothelioma treatment and is sometimes effective in reducing tumours with powerful drugs, but to receive this treatment one requires to be relatively fit. This would be assessed by the medical team supporting the patient. It has also been known for oncologists to hold this type of treatment in reserve, especially if a patient is well when assessed, though they would be reviewed regularly. These decisions are hugely influenced by quality of life.

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy can also be used as a treatment option for mesothelioma. Using targeted radiation an oncologist can kill cancer cells and shrink tumours, generally with less side effects than chemotherapy. This treatment can be used in all stages, subject to clinical assessment.

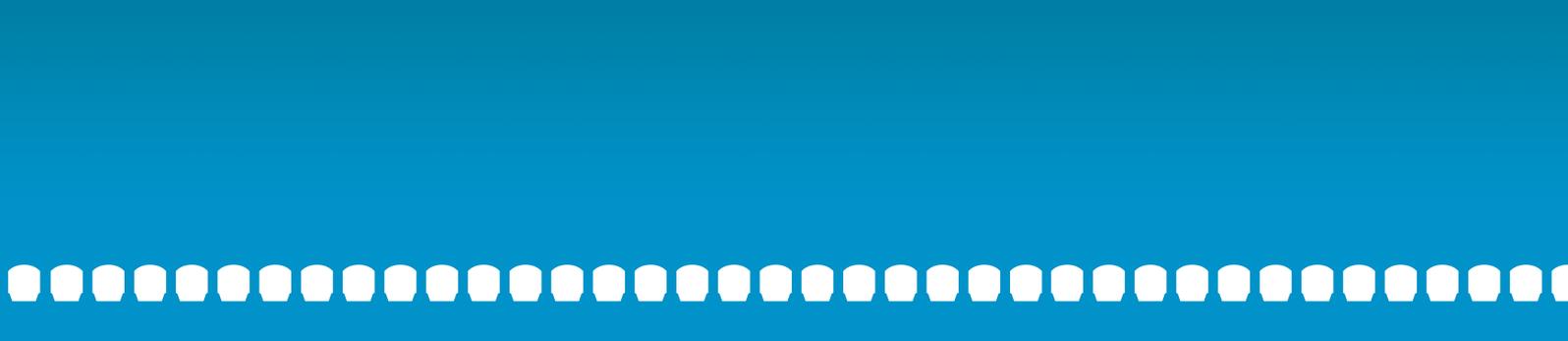
Although unable to eliminate or cure the cancer, radiation has been most effective as a way to relieve some of the pain that accompanies mesothelioma.

Surgery

Surgery for mesothelioma may be done to try to cure the cancer or to relieve (palliate) pain and other symptoms caused by the tumour.

Surgery to try to cure the cancer is known as potentially curative surgery. This type of surgery may be an option if you are in otherwise good health and the cancer has not spread too far to be removed completely. Unfortunately, even when the surgeon can remove all of the cancer that can be seen, some cancer cells are often left behind. These cells can grow and divide, causing the cancer to come back after surgery. Because of this, not all doctors agree on the exact role of surgery. In most cases it is not likely to cure you but may extend your life. Still, potentially curative surgery is being done in some major cancer centres, and a small number of patients who have had the surgery have had long remissions of their disease.

Palliative surgery may be an option if the tumour has already spread beyond where it started and is difficult to remove completely, or if you are too ill for a more extensive operation. The goal of this surgery is to relieve or prevent symptoms, as opposed to trying to cure the cancer.



Asbestos-related lung cancer

Asbestos-related lung cancer is caused by exposure to asbestos dust. The level of exposure to asbestos dust required to cause lung cancer is similar or greater than that required to cause asbestosis.

The overall scale of asbestos-related lung cancer deaths can only be estimated rather than counted. This is because it is difficult to tell these cancers apart from those due to other causes such as smoking. It is therefore very difficult to establish for certain the lung cancer has been caused by asbestos exposure.

Symptoms

Symptoms of asbestos-related lung cancer include chest infections, breathlessness, coughing up bloodstained phlegm, pain when coughing or taking deep breaths or a long-standing cough becoming noticeably worse.

How is it diagnosed?

There are no physical differences between lung cancer caused by asbestos exposure and lung cancer caused by smoking (the most common cause of lung cancer). A significant number of people who have been exposed to asbestos dust have also been smokers. It has been medically established that a person exposed to asbestos can develop lung cancer, even if they do not suffer from asbestosis (scarring of the lungs caused by exposure to asbestos dust).

If you think you have developed asbestos-related lung cancer as a result of exposure to asbestos at work, we would encourage you should seek medical advice and contact Asbestos Action as soon as possible.

MANAGING YOUR CONDITION

You have recently been diagnosed with an asbestos-related illness and you will no doubt have many questions and concerns. You may be confused about this condition and what implications this may have. You will also want to know how to best **manage the symptoms of your condition**.

Breathing

Difficulty breathing is one of several common symptoms of lung cancer of any type, including mesothelioma, which is almost always caused by asbestos exposure.

People describe different sensations that fit under the definition of difficulty breathing. For some, mild exercise like climbing stairs can trigger a sense of difficulty breathing. Others with advanced lung disease may have a hard time getting air in and out but not really feel any shortness of breath.

Early lung cancer including mesothelioma may have no signs or symptoms at all. However the following can present, in addition to difficulty breathing:

- A persistent cough that doesn't go away
- Changes in how you cough if you already have a smoker's cough
- Hoarseness
- Coughing blood up - no matter how little
- Difficulty breathing - in the form of shortness of breath or wheezing
- Chest pain.

The symptoms of mesothelioma can make it difficult to maintain daily living activities at times. The breathlessness can become severe for some people, making it difficult to walk short distances or even painful to rest or lie down. While there is no cure for mesothelioma, there are some measures that can be taken to treat the shortness of breath and ease suffering.

Some people find having oxygen can alleviate the difficulty breathing and this can be provided at home. There are also a variety of drugs that can help open the lung passages and provide relief from shortness of breath. As with most drugs there are side-effects but your consultant should be advising you.

Mesothelioma sufferers and carers often find it helpful to know in advance that shortness of breath can lead to a sense of decreased alertness. Shortness of breath can also lead to feeling confused, odd behaviour and tremors in the hands.



Anxiety will only exacerbate the problems with breathing, so anything to stay relaxed - such as meditation, music, prayer or guided imagery - can be very helpful.

You can help yourself by thinking ahead. Make sure the things you need at home during the day are easy to get to and think about what you are going to do beforehand. Here are some ideas you can try out:

- Move everything you need downstairs to avoid unnecessary trips up and down
- You may want to have another phone point put in so you don't have to get up when it rings
- You could use a cordless phone or a mobile
- If carrying shopping or washing is difficult try a trolley or bag on wheels to save your energy
- If you have to do household tasks, plan ahead and gather everything you need before you start
- Pace yourself and allow rest times as you will get more done if you don't try to take on too much at once
- Have a fan positioned where it can blow a stream of cool air across your face. This can help to reduce breathlessness. You can also use a hand held portable fan
- It can be easier to walk and use stairs if you try matching your breaths to the steps you take. Breathe in on one step and out on the next couple. Don't rush. It's better to go upstairs slowly than rush up and have to stop and recover at the top.
- Chewing and swallowing can be hard if you are feeling breathless. Have lots of small meals instead of a few large ones
- Take smaller mouthfuls
- Avoid foods that are difficult to chew
- Keep a drink to hand to sip through the day.

Remember that you can lose a lot of fluid in your breath; especially if you are breathing through your mouth. Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids. Being dehydrated can make saliva and phlegm stickier. Thick saliva can also make it difficult to chew and swallow.

Pain Management

Malignant mesothelioma is a disease that typically has no symptoms early in the disease process. In many cases, the asbestos exposure that caused the disease could have occurred as many as 30 to 60 years earlier. Mesothelioma starts to develop when asbestos fibres become imbedded in the lungs and scar tissue forms around the asbestos fibres. But the sufferer does not detect the formation of scar tissue, as it causes no perceptible pain.

As the fibrous scar tissue accumulates the cancerous tumours start to grow in the mesothelium, large amounts of fluid can gather. This excess fluid known as a pleural effusion causes much of the pain associated with mesothelioma. Chest pain due to pressure and pain during coughing are directly caused by the fluid accumulation.

As tumours push against the nerves and other organs, it can produce pain. When a person with mesothelioma experiences this pain they should inform a doctor. **There is absolutely no need to endure pain when there are remedies available to make you more comfortable.**

Certain cancer treatments may help to relieve the pain. In some cases tumour progression can be slowed. Fluid can be drained to help eliminate the pressure caused by the accumulation. In addition to direct treatment for cancerous tumours, there are also specific pain management tools that may prove useful. Ask your doctor about directly treating the pain.

In most cases pain is controlled through medication called pharmacological therapy. The type of drug and the method used to administer the medication will depend on the type, cause and severity of the pain a sufferer experiences.

There are also several non-pharmacological therapies available to those suffering from chronic forms of mesothelioma and lung cancer pain. Management of symptoms can include therapeutic exercise, cognitive behaviour techniques such as meditation and some dietary changes.

Newer mesothelioma treatments like acupuncture and massage therapy may also be useful in mesothelioma pain management. These tactics can help curb long-term chronic pain, but experiences of short-term severe pain should be discussed with a doctor.

Nutrition

Many people feel tired and experience a lack of energy in the early stages of the disease. Their appetite may still be very good and there can be a tendency to put on weight. It is important to try to eat healthily to prevent excess weight gain. Eating a healthy diet is based on a balance of foods consumed within five food groups. Consuming a wide range of foods will help you to obtain a wide range of nutrients required to keep your body functioning properly. **Foods high in fat and sugar are not essential to a healthy diet, but add choice and taste. They can also help increase your calorie intake if you are finding it difficult to eat and are losing weight.**

Not eating well?

If you are not eating as well as you would normally, the following tips may help you to eat more. Eat “little and often”. Try to include snacks between meals and before bed. Keeping snacks at easy reach may help you to eat more often.

If you are only eating small portions you need to get more calories without necessarily having to eat more food. Start by buying full fat foods. Avoid “light” or “diet” versions of foods. These are not appropriate for you at the moment.

Change in taste

Change in taste is common with all cancers. In mesothelioma this can be due to the cancer itself or the side effects of treatment. You may find that foods you previously enjoyed now taste unpleasant. Foods such as red meat or coffee can taste bitter while some people complain of a metallic taste. Others find everything tastes the same “like cardboard”, “a bit chemically”, very salty or very sweet. Some people may find that food does not taste of anything at all or doesn't taste “normal”.

Difficulty in swallowing food

Difficulty in swallowing food, known as dysphagia, can occur when the walls surrounding the gullet (oesophagus) become thickened or compressed due to the disease. This can narrow the food pipe and make swallowing more difficult. Following a softer diet may be easier to manage.

Exercise

The health benefits of aerobic and strength exercises are well known. Slightly less known, however, is the potential benefits of exercise for cancer patients before, during and after chemotherapy treatment. Light exercises can often reduce symptoms associated with cancer treatment.

One particular type of cancer that exercise may particularly benefit is mesothelioma. Mesothelioma is a type of cancer that affects the linings of internal organs, especially the lungs. Light exercising during treatment can greatly improve mesothelioma prognosis by maintaining and improving lung capacity and oxygen flow throughout the body.

The following are a few of the symptoms cancer patients typically face and the associated benefit that could be potentially gained through exercise. It is important to note that all exercises should be done under the supervision of a medical expert.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a common symptom during therapy. Cardiovascular exercise improves circulation which improves oxygen levels and helps remove toxins from the body. Removing toxins and improving oxygen flow will both help to decrease symptoms of fatigue. By reducing the symptoms of fatigue, a better quality of life and improved recovery time may be achieved.

Aerobic Capacity

Patients suffering from mesothelioma often have diminished lung capacity as part of the disease process. People with mesothelioma should exercise as much as possible to improve capacity. Regaining and improving aerobic capacity allows for proper oxygen flow, improves elimination of toxins, improves overall circulation, enhances quality of life and may increase life expectancy.

Body weight

Many people undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy often struggle with maintaining weight. Exercising can help to maintain body mass and improve muscle tone. Improved body mass often helps to speed recovery and provides strength during treatments.



Emotional Health

You may find yourself overcome with many different emotions. This happens to a lot of people. It can be hard to know what to do when you feel low. Knowing where to start can be especially daunting.

One of the best things to do is to talk about how you feel with someone close. Family and friends often know you best and will usually understand your feelings.

It's really important to take care of yourself. Try to eat well and exercise regularly. You may not feel like it at the time, but getting up and dressed each day can really help.

It's normal for your feelings to build up. If you feel like they are getting too much, there are ways to release your tension. Complementary therapies may help you to relax, while support groups allow you to share your experiences. Some organisations provide counselling and emotional support, if you feel this would help.

It may take a while for you to know what works and what doesn't. Advice and support is always available if you are finding it difficult to cope.

Almost everyone who is going through or has been through cancer can benefit from getting some type of support. You need people you can turn to for strength and comfort.

What's best for you depends on your situation and personality

Some people feel safe in peer-support groups or education groups. Others would rather talk in an informal setting talking one-on-one with a trusted friend or counsellor. Whatever your source of strength or comfort, make sure you have a place to go with your concerns. The cancer journey can feel very lonely. It's not necessary or good for you to try to deal with everything on your own and your friends and family may feel shut out if you don't include them. Let them in and anyone else you feel may help.

Learning about the cancer and its treatment can give you back some feeling of control. This can help you feel more confident about the future. But it's up to you to decide how much information you would like at any time. The information can assist you during talks with your doctor, your family and your friends. It will also allow you to feel more involved in your care, and more in control generally.

It will also help if you tell people what you really think and feel. This will assist them in understanding the issues that are important to you.

Learning relaxation techniques

Relaxation is a useful antidote to stress. People with cancer can feel under stress all the time. It's not easy to just tell yourself to relax. But there are ways to relax that can be learned. Below are some ideas for inducing a state of deep relaxation within you.

Breathe

First, sit up straight. Take a deep breath — but don't try to expand your chest. Instead, let your stomach go and your rib cage will expand naturally. Hold briefly, then slowly let your breath out. This type of breathing relaxes your muscles. The deep breathing itself reduces tension and can thus ease muscle and back pain. If you like, think about a word or phrase, especially one that has spiritual or emotional meaning for you. You can also focus on your breath — think about your breath as it comes in and goes out. The important thing is to focus your mind on something simple that's not related to your problems.

Relax slowly

Sit or lie down and close your eyes. Beginning with your forehead, tense your facial muscles in whatever ways make sense. You might furrow your brow — hold it for a few seconds, then release it. Next do it with your eyes. Then your mouth and so on. Next, move to your shoulders. Shrug them up tightly and hold, then release. Tense your arms and hold, then release. Continue this approach with each part of your body down to your toes. Now think about feeling warm and heavy and relaxed. Breathe softly for a while before you open your eyes. Or use this technique to help you get to sleep at night.

Mesothelioma treatment

Relaxation is critical to dealing with the rigors of mesothelioma treatment. It may help to combine relaxation techniques with visualization. You can sit or lie down. Close your eyes, and for five to 10 minutes, imagine a place you enjoy thinking about. It may be you on a beach, you engaged in a sport you love, or you and your family in your home or the house where you grew up. Think about the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of this special place and continue to breathe slowly and deeply.

Lung cancer treatment

Learning to relax can be very difficult when you are fearful and anxious about your health, your life, your finances or your family. Be patient with yourself as you practice these ideas. It is especially helpful to practice relaxation regularly, even when you are feeling okay. It's more difficult to achieve the desired state when you are feeling extremely anxious or depressed.

Travel

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

An EHIC Card entitles you to reduced-cost, sometimes free medical treatment that becomes necessary while you're in a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland. The EHIC also covers any treatment you need for a chronic disease or pre-existing illness. However you are advised to take out comprehensive private insurance for visits to all countries, regardless of whether you are covered by your EHIC. It is advisable for everyone to apply for an EHIC card followed by a '**Holiday Insurance for Cancer and Asbestos-related Diseases Sufferers**'.

Applying for an European Health Insurance Card

You can apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) online, by phone or by post. You can apply for an EHIC for your spouse/partner and any children up to the age of 16 (or 19 if they are in full-time education) at the same time as applying for your own. If you are a foster parent or guardian (including boarding school teaching staff), you can apply on behalf of any children you are looking after. You must be over 16 to apply as a main applicant. Regardless of how you apply, you will need to have the following information to hand for everyone you are applying for:

- Name, Date of Birth and NHS or National Insurance (NI) Number

In Scotland the NHS number is known as the Community Health Index (CHI) number and in Northern Ireland it is known as the Health and Care number. The EHIC is issued by the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) and is free of charge. The quickest and easiest way to apply for an EHIC is online. Your card will be delivered within seven days. The website address is: www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card

To apply by phone, call **0845 606 2030** and have the information listed above ready. When your application is completed your card will be delivered within 10 days.

To apply by post, pick up the EHIC form and pre-addressed envelope from the Post Office. Your card will be delivered within 21 days. For a nominal fee, the Post Office will check your completed application form and forward it for processing. This service is optional. There is space for up to four dependent children on the application form. If you apply online or by telephone, you can apply on behalf of more children. If you are applying by post and you lose the pre-addressed envelope, send your completed application form to: **EHIC Applications, PO Box 1115, Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 1SW**

Holiday Insurance for Cancer and Asbestos-related Diseases Sufferers

It is advisable to arrange for specialist travel insurance at the very start of your holiday plans.

ACCESSING BENEFITS

The benefits system is very complicated and can be extremely difficult to access. The rules are changing all the time and rates of benefits varies widely depending on a number of circumstances such as your age, disability/illness and any savings or income you may have. Please note, not all benefits are affected by all factors.

These are some of the benefits you or your family may be entitled to:

If you are incapable of work

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Paid by your employer.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

To claim ESA, phone Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688** or go to www.gov.uk

If you have a physical and/or mental disability

Attendance Allowance (AA)

To claim Attendance Allowance, phone **0345 605 6055**.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

To make a claim for PIP you should phone **0800 917 2222**.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB)

To claim IIDB phone Jobcentre Plus on **0345 758 5433** or go to www.gov.uk

If you are a carer

Carers Allowance

To claim Carers Allowance, phone **0345 608 4321** or go to www.gov.uk

Travel

Road Tax

Phone the Disability Benefits Centre on **03457 123 456**

Blue Badge

To apply for a Blue Badge, contact your Local Authority

Travel Card

To check if you qualify, go to www.transportscotland.gov.uk

Other benefits

Income Support

To claim Income Support phone Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688** or go to **www.gov.uk**

Jobseekers Allowance

To claim Jobseekers Allowance phone Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688** or go to **www.gov.uk**

Pension Credit

To claim Pension Credit phone **0800 99 1234** or go to **www.gov.uk**

Social Fund

Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or go to **www.gov.uk**

Scottish Welfare Fund

Contact your local council for information on the Scottish Welfare Fund

Tax Credits

To claim Tax Credits phone the Tax Credit helpline on **0345 300 3900**

Universal Credit

To check your eligibility for Universal Credit go to **www.gov.uk/universalcredit/eligibility**

Housing

Council Tax Reduction

If you think you may be entitled, contact your local council

Council Tax Exemption

If you think you may be entitled, contact your local council

Disabled Person's Reduction

If you think you may be entitled, contact your local council

Housing Benefits

If you think you may be entitled, contact your local council

Mortgage Costs

To claim help with your mortgage, contact the office paying your benefit

HOW ASBESTOS ACTION CAN SUPPORT YOU

Asbestos Action provides one to one support when you have been diagnosed with Mesothelioma or Lung Cancer where asbestos is a factor. We offer practical and emotional support tailored to your own personal requirements. We can advise you on your rights regarding state benefits and civil compensation as well as signposting you to other organisations. Asbestos Action will offer ongoing support to you and your family for as long as you feel it is required.

One to one support

Once you have been diagnosed with an asbestos related illness we will:

- Answer any questions that you may have.
- Advise on what benefits and compensation you may be entitled to and complete all the forms.
- Recommend legal advisors who specialise in asbestos related Civil Compensation
- Continue to offer **ongoing support** to you and your family after entitlements have been received.

t: 01382 225715

USEFUL CONTACTS

Lung Cancer Nurse Specialists

The clinical nurse specialist is a nurse who has expert knowledge and experience in lung cancer, often called your key worker: they form part of the team of healthcare professionals who will be providing support, information and advice during your investigations, diagnosis and treatment.

Palliative Care Team

These specialist teams should include palliative medicine consultants and palliative care nurse specialists together with a range of expertise provided by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, pharmacists, social workers and those able to give spiritual and psychological support.

NHS 24

Call free on **111** if you are ill and it can't wait until your regular NHS service reopens.

Maggie's Centre

At Maggie's you can talk to, and get support from, a range of professional people. Go to www.maggiescentres.org to find a Maggie's Centre near you.



**Asbestos Action
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