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# Asbestos

## What this guide is about

This guide explains what asbestos is, why it might be a problem, where it might be found, how we survey your home for it and how to deal with asbestos.

## Who is this guide for

For people who live in a Progress Housing Group home.

## Bitesize summary

- Asbestos is safe unless it is disturbed and fibres are released
- We keep your property well-maintained, and any asbestos-containing materials are unlikely to need attention
- As long as they are in good condition, any materials containing asbestos do not pose a risk to your health.

**Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which consists of tiny fibres. It has been widely used as a popular building material since the 1950s and was officially banned in 1999.**

Asbestos was used to keep the heat in and cold out of homes. It also has good fire protection properties and protects against corrosion.

Properties built from 2000 onwards are very unlikely to contain asbestos.

## Asbestos risks

Asbestos cannot harm anybody unless they breathe in asbestos fibres. Therefore, products containing asbestos do not normally present a problem unless they become damaged or worn and the asbestos fibres are released into the air.

If this happens, the fibres can be breathed deep into the lung, where they may stay for a long time. When very high levels of these fibres are breathed in, there is a risk of lung diseases, including cancer.

People who have worked with asbestos for many years, or have washed the dusty clothing of those who worked with asbestos, are most likely to be affected.

## Identifying asbestos

You can't tell if a material contains asbestos just by looking at it. The only way to tell for sure is to have a sample taken and sent for analysis. This is a specialist job that specially licensed contractors and laboratories can only carry out. The most common places to find asbestos include:

### Outdoor

- Roof construction
- Rainwater guttering and downpipes
- Flue pipes
- Corrugated cement sheeting - usually found on outbuildings and garage roofs.

### Indoor

- Textured coatings, for example, Artex-type decorative coatings before 2000
- Fire stop panels (inside heater cupboards and around boilers)
- Floor tiles and adhesive
- Toilet cisterns and seats
- Flue pipes
- Fuse box cupboards
- Bath panels and boxing.

## Managing asbestos

If we are doing major work on your property, such as replacing a kitchen or bathroom, and where we don't already have an existing survey, we will survey your home to:

- Find asbestos-containing materials
- Record what the material is, where it is and how much there is
- Record how accessible the material is, its condition and any surface treatment
- Record the asbestos type.

We undertake two types of surveys:

**Management survey** - to manage asbestos-containing materials during the normal occupation and use of the property.

**Refurbishment survey** - where your home, or part of it, needs updating or refurbishing.

## Managing asbestos in communal areas

Any asbestos in communal (shared) parts of our independent living schemes and blocks of flats is:

- Removed or sealed with special paint
- Left in place and inspected yearly or at intervals stated in the previous survey/re-inspection.

## What to expect during a survey

If a survey is required, a specialist surveyor will visit your home to undertake an appropriate survey. This will involve accessing all areas in your home. The surveyor will take small samples and photographs of any suspected asbestos-containing materials.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the survey, some damage to decoration, walls, floors etc., is to be expected. This temporary damage will be rectified as part of the refurbishment works.

The sampling of suspect materials will be done in a controlled manner by appropriately trained personnel. During sampling, you will be asked to leave the immediate area. Before the surveyor leaves, any sampled materials will be sealed and left in a safe condition.

You must leave the room during the sampling process to ensure your safety.

If asbestos-containing materials need repair or removal, we will arrange for a specialist contractor to do the work.

## **What you can do**

- Before carrying out any DIY, get in touch with us so we can advise if there is a risk that you could damage asbestos-containing materials
- Don't drill, sand or scrape anything you think may contain asbestos
- Always soak wallpaper before removing; if possible, use a steam stripper
- Don't try to remove textured coatings from ceilings. Wash any areas of flaking paint before repainting
- Don't try to remove old floor tiles. Please leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them
- If you suspect that asbestos-containing materials have been damaged, please get in touch with us immediately on 0333 320 4555.

## **Other ways we can help**

Please contact us if you have any concerns about asbestos. We also have lots of useful information about home safety on our website.

### **You may also be interested in**

- Fire safety
- Electrical safety
- Gas safety
- Legionella and water safety
- How we are performing – compliance and health and safety.

## Get in touch

The quickest way to get in touch is online at [www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk) by:

- Logging into your online tenant account
- Emailing us
- Live chat – available Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.

You can also:

- Call us on 0333 320 4555
- Visit or write to us - Sumner House, 21 King Street, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 2LW.

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Progress Housing Group is the trading name of Progress Housing Association Limited.

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## Report or track a repair or check your rent balance

You can pay your rent, check your rent balance and report or track a non-emergency repair online 24/7.

Log in or sign up for your online tenant account at [www.progressgroup.org.uk](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk)

## Complaints and compliments

Your feedback is very important to us and helps us to improve our services. If you want to tell us that we have been doing something well or are unhappy about something, please tell us using the contact details on the left.

Our Complaints Policy and process follow the standards set out in the Housing Ombudsmen's Complaint Handling Code. You can read more on our website or let us know if you would like a leaflet.

## Information in another format or language

This leaflet is available in the following formats:

- EasyRead
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille
- Other languages.

More information is available at [www.progressgroup.org.uk/access](http://www.progressgroup.org.uk/access)