



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. It was used in building materials due to its durability, fire resistance and insulation properties. In the past, cement was mixed with asbestos to make it stronger and easier to mould into different shapes and sizes, such as wall cladding and roofing.

Asbestos has not been used in domestic building materials since the 1980s but it was not until 31 December 2003 that asbestos and all asbestos containing products were banned throughout Australia (the ban does not apply to asbestos installed prior to this date e.g. asbestos in houses).

How can I tell if my home contains asbestos?

Most houses built before the late 1980s have some asbestos containing products.

Asbestos fibres may be present in a number of products previously used in homes, including:

- roofing and shingles
- exterior and interior wall cladding
- fencing
- thermal boards around fireplaces
- backing material on floor tiles and vinyl flooring
- asbestos-rope door gaskets in wood stoves
- textured paints and decorative ceiling coatings
- insulation used on hot water pipes, domestic heaters and stoves.



Does asbestos pose a health risk?

Asbestos is not dangerous if it is not damaged, crumbled or crushed. This means that, while there may be asbestos in your home, it is not generally a problem if left undisturbed and remains in good condition.

However, damaged, crumbled or crushed asbestos can be a big problem for human health as fibres may be released into the air. When asbestos is inhaled or swallowed, the small fibres may cause illness and can lead to death.

Unsafe removal or damage of asbestos containing materials can also contaminate the ground around your home.

The use of power tools for cutting, drilling, grinding, sanding or sawing asbestos containing material can release significant numbers of fibres as can the use of high pressure water blasters to clean the material prior to painting. These activities must not be performed.

Can I transfer out of my home because I think it has asbestos?

No, you cannot transfer into a new property because of the presence of asbestos in your home. Providing the area is left undamaged, it is safe to remain in the property.

If the area becomes damaged, a Unity Housing contractor can ensure the area is repaired to ensure safety.

My home may contain asbestos – what should I do?

Firstly, as per your residential tenancy agreement, you may not alter your home in any way without the permission of Unity Housing.

If you think your home has damage to suspected asbestos containing materials, please report this to Unity Housing and stay clear of the area.

Do not:

- Disturb the area that has the damage
- Try to do any work that involves sawing, drilling, water blasting, grinding or sanding at your property before getting approval from your Housing Officer
- Dust, sweep or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos

A contractor will come to your home as soon as possible and inspect the area, and possibly take a sample for microscopic analysis.

If the material contains asbestos, Unity Housing will ensure the material is rendered safe or removed.

As a Unity Tenant, you are responsible for:

- Reporting to your Housing Officer any damage confirmed or suspected to asbestos containing material in your property.
- Notifying your Housing Officer of any proposed installation or work that could potentially disturb the property's fabric or asbestos containing material in the property.

More information

For more information about asbestos go to <http://www.asbestos.sa.gov.au/>

This website is the outcome of collaboration between SafeWork SA, SA Health, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the Local Government Association of South Australia, Housing SA and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI). Each agency plays an important role in managing the risks of exposure and providing information and advice to South Australians about asbestos.