



Family & Friends of Mesothelioma Patients:

Get answers and information



1

Overview

Whether your spouse, family member, or friend was recently diagnosed with mesothelioma or has known about the illness for some time, this booklet will help you become a source of knowledge, guidance, and strength for the person you love.

What You Need to Know

Mesothelioma is a fast-moving form of cancer. With that in mind, Sokolove Law wants to provide you with useful information you need.

Within these pages you will find: topics that include a general mesothelioma overview, specific ways you can make a difference in the patient's life, and guidance on what to say and what not to say to a patient undergoing treatment. We will also introduce you to the important process of pursuing a mesothelioma legal claim.

We hope that the time you spend reviewing this information will benefit you as well as the patient about whom you care so much. If you need help right away, please call one of our highly trained mesothelioma paralegals at **866-469-8873**.



2

Understanding Mesothelioma

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

If you're like most people, you probably had never heard of "mesothelioma" until you received the news that someone you love had been 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 or 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 does someone get mesothelioma?

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

Mesothelioma symptoms can easily be mistaken for those of common, less serious illnesses.

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.

**Manufacturers knew about the dangers of asbestos
and still chose to put profits ahead of people.**



3

Legal Support for Mesothelioma Patients and Their Families

Sokolove Law helps mesothelioma victims across the country

If someone you love has 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 family member's 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.

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 30 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 2,000 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 **866-469-8873**. 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 a case goes to trial, it is crucial 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 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 my loved one?

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 my family member have to testify at a 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 my loved one pursue compensation even if they don't know where they were exposed to asbestos?

Generally speaking, the answer is yes. If they're unsure about where they may have been exposed to asbestos, they 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.



4

Setting Expectations

What to expect immediately after a mesothelioma 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 among the four stages 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.

The patient may want a second opinion

Mesothelioma is a complex disease, so the specialist or insurance company may recommend getting a second opinion. A confirmed second opinion will give you and the patient more confidence in the medical team's recommended course of action.

It may be possible to enroll in a clinical trial

The specialist may also recommend enrolling in a clinical trial or research study. By participating, the patient will have the benefit of receiving new types of treatment, while also having the satisfaction of knowing he or she is helping other patients by participating in cutting-edge medical research.

What to expect in the months following diagnosis

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

5

You Can Make a Difference

How you can help a friend or family member with mesothelioma

The best way to figure out how to help a family member or a friend who is going through mesothelioma treatments is simple—just ask. However, for various reasons, patients can often be reluctant to fully share their feelings or ask for assistance. What then?

Ways you can lend a hand

- Help to “accident proof” the home by moving furniture to create a clear pathway for a walker or wheelchair, adding nightlights in hallways and bathrooms, and removing any tripping hazards. (For more ideas, see the section on “Making a Home Safe and Comfortable” in this booklet.)
- Make yourself available at a specific time every week or month for any household errands or chores that need to be done.
- Visit, but ask permission first.
- Call often, while letting the patient know it’s OK not to pick up the phone.
- Set a date to attend a fun event together — looking forward to something can really lift a person’s spirits.
- Offer to help with specific tasks, such as taking care of a pet or preparing a nutritionist-approved meal.
- Be a good listener. If a patient is having a bad day, it can be a huge help to be able to complain and generally let off steam with someone who will not be judgmental — that someone can be you.



6

Finding the Right Words

What to say and what not to say

When coping with a family member or friend's mesothelioma diagnosis, it may seem like there are simply no words to express your feelings. If you're unsure of what to say, it may help to have some guidance. Below are some simple expressions that can offer support and comfort.

Simple expressions to keep in mind

- ✓ I am so sorry this has happened to you.
- ✓ You mean so very much to me.
- ✓ I am always here to listen and talk with you.
- ✓ What can I do to help, specifically? (Be ready to offer a few concrete suggestions, such as providing a healthy meal, arranging for the grandkids to visit, doing laundry, etc.)
- ✓ How are you holding up?
- ✓ I'll be with you every step of the way and will do everything that I can to help you.

Expressions mesothelioma patients would rather not hear

- ✗ I know just how you feel.
- ✗ Don't worry. I'm sure you'll be just fine.
- ✗ Let me tell you about the power of positive thinking.
- ✗ I don't know how you manage.
- ✗ How much time do the doctors give you?

7

Sharing the News

How to talk about mesothelioma with both children and adults

Because it can be difficult to share the news of a mesothelioma diagnosis, don't be surprised if the patient asks you to be the one who appropriately spreads the word among family and friends. Regardless of whether the patient is a spouse, another family member, or a close friend, being prepared will allow you to confidently break the news, and then have more thoughtful, caring conversations in the months that follow.

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 a loved one or friend. It helps to simplify things. For example, you could say that mesothelioma is a type of cancer that develops in a person's body over a long period of time after he or she has been exposed to asbestos. Your conversations will vary depending on whether you're speaking with adults, teenagers, or younger children, and their relationship to the patient.

These tips from the National Cancer Institute will ensure conversations are thoughtful, productive, and helpful for everyone.

Speaking with young children about a diagnosis

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

- Keep your tone simple and loving.
- Explain that mesothelioma is a sickness in the body, but don't offer many details.
- Reassure children that they are not at risk of "catching" the disease, and that the patient 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 a 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 a friend or family member has been diagnosed with mesothelioma.
- Tell them what the disease is and how the patient got it.
- Be honest about the prognosis. There is no point in trying to shield anyone from the facts — and you can bet that their next step will be “Googling” the disease to find their own information.

Speaking with adults about a 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.
- Share details about the treatment plan, but also share the prognosis.
- Let them know how they can help and be involved in the patient’s care.
- Promise to keep them updated on the patient’s progress.

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



8

Making a Home Safe and Comfortable

Making a patient's home an accident-free space during and after treatment

During the course of a patient's treatment, he or she may need to rely on a wheelchair or walker. The patient may also need to use a portable oxygen tank. It is important to make sure the patient can safely move around the home. Here are a few tips to consider.

- Move furniture and clear hallways so the patient can move around safely.
- Check that each room is adequately lit to ensure the patient can see where they are going.
- 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.



9

Taking Care of Yourself

Caregivers need support too — resources to get through the tough times

A mesothelioma diagnosis affects more than just the patient. The spouse, children, grandchildren, extended family members, and friends will also be hurt by this devastating diagnosis. While much of the attention understandably goes to the patient, caregivers need and deserve support, too. The National Cancer Institute offers this “bill of rights” for caregivers to keep in mind when the going gets tough.

Caregiver’s bill of rights

- 1. I have the right to take care of myself.** This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the ability to take better care of my loved one.
- 2. I have the right to seek help from others** even though my loved one may object. I know the limits of my own endurance and strength.
- 3. I have the right to maintain parts of my own life** that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can do for this person. I have the right to do some things just for myself.
- 4. I have the right to get angry,** to be depressed, and to express difficult feelings once in a while.
- 5. I have the right to reject any attempt by my loved one to make me do things out of guilt or anger** (It doesn’t matter if he or she is aware of doing it or not).
- 6. I have the right to get consideration, affection, forgiveness, and acceptance** for what I do for my loved one, as I offer these in return.
- 7. I have the right to take pride in what I’m doing.** And I have the right to applaud the courage it has taken to meet the needs of my loved one.
- 8. I have the right to protect my individuality.** I also have the right to a life that will sustain me in times when my loved one no longer needs my full-time help.

Join a support group

A support group offers a place where caregivers can share their feelings and common experiences with others. Whether the support group meets in person or online, those who participate report feeling far less isolated. Check out these resources to find a support group that's right for you:

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 the patient's medical care team as well as your local community center and places of worship for additional listings of support groups in your area.



10

Resources for Mesothelioma Patients, Friends & Family

Get help with travel, lodging, finances, and more

The following is a list of organizations whose sole purpose is to help patients and families get the care and help they need.

Travel and Transportation

Getting the best care possible means working with a medical team that is highly skilled and experienced in treating the type of mesothelioma your loved one has. 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.

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

Where your loved one stays while undergoing treatment is more than just a place to lay their head at night; it is their home away from home. 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

Organizations with a proven track record of assisting mesothelioma victims who need help with their medical bills.

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





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