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Questions and Answers

Exposure to Asbestos in Sources Other than Insulation

Am I at risk for exposure to asbestos if I cut or drive nails through asbestos shingles or cut asbestos tiles?

Some but not all shingles and tiles contain asbestos. It is important to verify whether your materials contain asbestos.

Driving nails into or cutting shingles and tiles could be a problem if doing so causes airborne dust to be released. Asbestos must be in the form of free fibers and usually must be inhaled over a period of time to result in harmful health effects.

Sanding or sawing tiles or shingles that contain asbestos would create dust that could be hazardous if inhaled.

Asbestos tiles and shingles, through weathering, can release asbestos fibers. However, assuming that the shingles and tiles are outside the home, it is unlikely that asbestos exposure will present a problem.

The manufacturing process that is used to make the shingles - or, for that matter, some tiles used in home sidings in the 40's and 50's - keeps asbestos fibers from being released.

What are the harmful health effects from exposure to asbestos?

It usually takes exposure to high concentrations, such as you might find in an asbestos mining or processing facility, to cause harmful health effects. Asbestos levels detected in homes are less likely to cause health effects.

These effects include:

- asbestosis, which is a build-up of scar-like tissue in the lungs (asbestosis) and in the membrane that surrounds the lungs, and

- two types of cancer – lung cancer and a mesothelioma, a cancer of the membrane that surrounds the lungs.

People who are exposed to lower levels of asbestos may also have an increased risk of developing cancer, but the risk is usually small.

For more information about Asbestos, go to [ATSDR ToxFAQsTM](#).

For other information, contact Kathy Skipper or Mike Grouett, ATSDR Office of Policy and

External Affairs, at (404) 639-0501, or via e-mail at the **ATSDR Press Office** at ATSDRPress@cdc.gov.



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