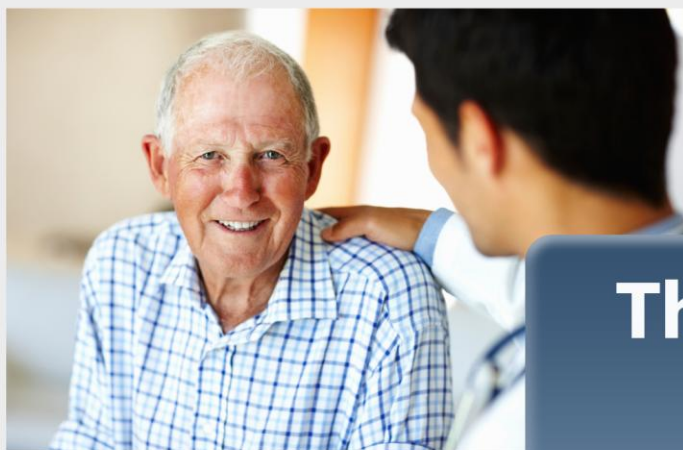


The **WILLIAMS**  
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## The Mesothelioma Guidebook

An informational resource to treatment options, support sources and legal advice after a mesothelioma diagnosis.

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## What is mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma is a form of cancer most commonly caused by asbestos exposure. Only about 2,000 to 3,000 cases of mesothelioma are diagnosed in the U.S. each year, making it an uncommon form of cancer, but for the thousands of people who suffer with the disease, it is aggressive and deadly. What makes mesothelioma especially tragic is that it is preventable. If you have received a mesothelioma diagnosis, it is important to understand the illness, your treatment options, and the many forms of support available to you.

## How mesothelioma forms

Mesothelioma takes years to develop. You may have been exposed to asbestos thirty to fifty years before you actually develop symptoms. Most people are over 60 before they know they have the disease.

Mesothelioma is a malignant tumor caused by asbestos exposure. It is a tumor that can form in the sac-like structure surrounding the lungs called the pleura or in the similar structures surrounding the abdominal cavity, the peritoneum, or the heart, the pericardium, and can even result in a more rare type of malignancy called tunica vaginalis.

Mesothelioma is the result of cell mutation that causes malignant cell growth. The tumor grows in diffuse patterns and spreads across the surface of the sac covering the particular organ, such as the pleura which surrounds the lungs. This tumor does not present in the form of a lump or a “golf ball” shaped tumor. Malignant mesothelioma causes serious symptoms, such as chest pain or shortness of breath.

## Asbestos

Asbestos fibers are the widely accepted cause of mesothelioma. Asbestos was a very low cost material with many applications because of its heat resistance and insulating properties as well as its bonding qualities and strength. Low cost and its many uses often made it the choice for production of insulation materials, gaskets and packing, component parts of all kinds of equipment and a wide variety of building materials. It was used widely until the late 1970s and unfortunately continued to be utilized in many products into the 1980s and 1990s in the United States.

Mesothelioma can be caused by low doses of exposure to visible asbestos dust. And even family members who have never worked with asbestos can develop mesothelioma second-hand because someone brought fibers home on their clothing.

## Types of mesothelioma

There are four types of mesothelioma:

- Pleural (surrounding the lungs)
- Peritoneal (lining of the abdominal cavity)
- Pericardial (surrounding the heart)
- Testicular (surrounding the testicles)

### Pleural Mesothelioma

The most common type of mesothelioma is pleural mesothelioma. Mesothelioma in the lining of the lungs often coincides with symptoms, such as shortness of breath, dry cough and chest pain. Although it originates in the chest cavity, pleural mesothelioma can metastasize in several other organs throughout the body, including the brain.

### Peritoneal Mesothelioma

Peritoneal mesothelioma is the second most prevalent form. Most people with peritoneal mesothelioma complain about severe abdominal pain or difficulty with bowel movements. This type often spreads to the liver, spleen, or bowel.

### Pericardial Mesothelioma

When mesothelioma forms around the heart, it restricts the delivery of oxygen to the body, which can cause chest pain and difficulty breathing.

### Testicular Mesothelioma

Because it is a more rare form, it is often not diagnosed until lumps form on the testes and is most often found during surgery or treatment for other conditions.

### Benign Mesothelioma

With the development of mesothelioma in any region of the body, tumors begin to form in the lining around the effected organs. In the majority of these cases, the tumors are malignant, but it is possible to develop benign mesotheliomas that are not cancerous.

Most benign mesotheliomas develop in the abdominal cavity and occur in people who do not have a history of asbestos exposure. These kinds of tumors are found most often in young or middle-aged women and pose no serious risk. However, if the tumor grows larger than 7 cm, it can cause painful swelling, seizures, and even a coma.

## The cause of mesothelioma

It is widely accepted that mesothelioma is caused by exposure to asbestos. In some limited circumstances, there can be other risk factors.

### Asbestos

Asbestos fibers were mined heavily and used widely in industrial sites, ships and shipyards, buildings, homes, and automobiles until the late 1970s and beyond. Asbestos is a known carcinogen and when its tiny fibers are released into the air, they can be inhaled into the lungs or swallowed and work their way into the digestive system.

Once in the body, those fibers can disrupt normal cell replication and cause tumors to form. People who are diagnosed with mesothelioma have experienced exposure to asbestos fibers. Exposure to asbestos can occur from a variety of circumstances, such as:

- through work with asbestos products
- as a bystander to the work of others that used asbestos materials
- from asbestos dust carried home by a family member who worked with the material
- through environmental exposures such as living near an asbestos facility

### Long latency period

Decades will pass between exposure to asbestos and the development of symptoms that will lead to diagnosis of a malignant tumor. Most cases of mesothelioma are diagnosed thirty to fifty years after exposure to asbestos.

If you or a loved one has been exposed to asbestos through your work, home or living environment, you should be aware of the signs and symptoms of mesothelioma so that the disease can be detected as early as possible.

There is currently no cure for mesothelioma, but early detection increases survival rates and quality of life in the remaining years following diagnosis.

## Asbestos exposure

Because asbestos is the leading cause of mesothelioma, knowing whether you have been exposed to inhalation of asbestos fibers is the first step in determining your risk for developing the disease. If you have already been diagnosed with mesothelioma, knowing when you were exposed and who was responsible for that exposure is the first step in determining whether you can seek compensation through the legal system for your injuries.

### On-the-job asbestos exposure

Most people who have been exposed to asbestos were exposed at work. The most at-risk workers include:

- Insulators
- Plumbers
- Pipefitters
- Construction workers
- Navy seamen
- Railroad workers
- Factory workers
- Ship builders

Any occupation where you dealt with asbestos in any part of the process puts you at risk for inhaling or swallowing the tiny asbestos fibers.

### Other common sources of asbestos exposure

Not every case of mesothelioma can be linked to direct exposure at a jobsite. Many people were exposed to asbestos in other ways, including:

- Through close relatives who unknowingly brought the fibers home on their clothing
- Living in an area where asbestos was mined or processed
- Renovating a home that contained asbestos in the building materials
- Serving on a military base or ship which used asbestos in its construction

You are at greater risk for developing mesothelioma if you had a high level of exposure to asbestos, you were exposed for a prolonged period of time, or you were exposed at a young age. Not everyone who has been exposed to asbestos fibers will develop mesothelioma, but people who were only exposed for short periods of time have developed this form of cancer. Other factors, such as genetic predisposition, can increase your likelihood of developing mesothelioma.

## Asbestos in the work place

The National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety has identified more than 75 groups of workers that are known to have been exposed to asbestos during work. In one study, estimates of workers living with asbestos-related cancer exceeded half of the workers exposed to the fibers between 1940 and 1970.

### Workers at the greatest risk for developing mesothelioma

Miners are the workers who are most at-risk for developing mesothelioma from asbestos exposure. The R.T. Vanderbilt talc mines in New York State and the W.R. Grace and Co. vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana, are two of the U.S. mines with the most cases of mesothelioma reported by past workers. Some of the other most hazardous occupations include:

- Building and repairing ships
- Manufacturing jobs
- Railroad workers
- Steel workers
- Construction sites where asbestos was used in construction

### Widespread asbestos use

During the late nineteenth and for most of the twentieth century the use of asbestos became widespread in the U.S. It was incorporated into many construction materials and consumer products, including:

- Insulation
- Pipe covering
- Gaskets
- Asbestos packing
- Refractory
- Asbestos bricks
- Transite boards
- Joint compound
- Floor tiles
- Ceiling tiles
- Roofing products

Workers that dealt with the manufacturing or use of any of these products are at risk for developing mesothelioma.

### Why asbestos was in the work place

Asbestos used to be called “the magic mineral” because it was so heat resistant while also being strong and durable. Asbestos fibers are flexible, resistant to wear and tear, great insulators, and they don’t burn or conduct heat. Because of all of these good qualities and the fact that it was very cheap to mine,

it could be used in a variety of products and construction materials. Unfortunately, asbestos was also an industrial toxin and carcinogen.

Although asbestos had been in wide use for a century in the U.S., it wasn't until the 1970s that regulation of the use of asbestos began. And even after this time frame asbestos was being used in the workplace and was still being incorporated into new products and materials offered for sale throughout the U.S.



## Asbestos job sites in New York

New York is home to numerous industries that give the hard working people of the state good, steady jobs. Unfortunately, many of these jobs included exposure to asbestos. From construction workers and union tradesmen to steel workers and ship builders, your job may have exposed you to asbestos fibers and put you at risk for developing mesothelioma.

This is a partial list of buildings and sites in the New York area that are known to have used or contain asbestos:

- Bethlehem Steel Shipyards
- Brooklyn Navy Yard
- Chrysler Building
- Con Ed Power Plants
- Danskammer Generating Station
- Domino Sugar Plant
- Empire State Building
- Georgia-Pacific Facilities
- Grumman Aerospace Facilities
- IBM Buildings
- Indian Point Power Plant
- John F. Kennedy International Airport
- Kearny Generating Station
- LaGuardia Airport
- LILCO Power Plants
- Madison Square Garden
- New York Piers
- New York World's Fair
- New York 34th Street Post Office
- Roseton Generating Station
- Schaefer Brewing Company
- Todd Shipyards
- Tomkins Cove
- Union Carbide Facilities
- U.S. Gypsum Plants
- World Trade Center

For a more comprehensive list of job sites in and around New York and New Jersey that have exposed workers to asbestos, please visit [Asbestos Job Sites in New York](#). If you have worked in any of these places, you may be at risk for developing mesothelioma and you may be entitled to recover compensation for your injuries.

## Asbestos at home

Although asbestos is most commonly encountered on the job, it can also be found in the home. The good news is that the presence of asbestos in your home is not necessarily a danger to your family's health.

### When asbestos is dangerous

Asbestos is a toxic material when it is friable and causes respirable dust. The danger that asbestos poses is through the inhalation or swallowing of the tiny asbestos fibers that can cause fibrosis, which is a scarring response in your body as well as malignancy or cancer.

If you suspect that you have asbestos material in your home, you should consult a professional before you attempt to remove or repair it. An extensive asbestos abatement procedure will likely be required.

### Asbestos hazards at home

Many homeowners find out that their home contains asbestos when they are looking into or starting home renovations. Some of the more common areas where you may encounter asbestos in your home include:

- Boilers and heating equipment insulated with asbestos
- Roofing materials
- Asbestos siding
- Insulation in the walls
- Joint compound as well as plaster walls
- Textured paint and patching compounds
- Artificial ashes and embers for gas fireplaces
- Protective paper, millboard or cement sheets around wood fireplaces
- Vinyl floor tiles or vinyl sheets for flooring
- Hot water pipes in old houses could be coated with asbestos

### What to do about asbestos in your home

If you suspect that your house contains asbestos materials, you should hire a professional to confirm that the material is present. You can also hire professional contractors to remove the asbestos containing materials.

## Mesothelioma is preventable

What makes mesothelioma so tragic is that it is a preventable form of cancer. Without exposure to asbestos, almost all mesothelioma patients would not have the disease.

### Banned uses of asbestos

As a result of Environmental Protection Agency rules and case law in the U.S., certain uses of asbestos are banned. These uses include:

- New uses of asbestos
- Flooring felt
- Specialty paper
- Commercial paper
- Corrugated paper
- Rollboard

### Asbestos containing products

Many products that contained asbestos and were previously installed are still present in homes and workplaces throughout the U.S. including:

- Ceiling and floor tiles
- Joint compounds and plasters
- Insulation
- Paint
- Pipe covering
- Furnace and boiler components

If you work with these products in your job or have them in your home, you may be exposed to asbestos fibers. Taking the initiative to question whether your environment contains asbestos and whether you are at risk for developing mesothelioma can decrease your risk of exposure and chances of developing mesothelioma.

### Know your exposure risk

Being aware of what products and work places put you at risk for asbestos exposure can help you protect yourself and your family against an increased risk of developing mesothelioma. If you are concerned about asbestos in your home, you can hire a professional to inspect your house and remove materials with asbestos in them. Any chance of materials releasing asbestos fibers into your environment is a danger to you and your family.

At your job, your employer should know whether you are using any materials that contain asbestos. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to protect workers by monitoring the work environment for concentrations of airborne asbestos and providing facemasks to prevent inhalation of asbestos fibers.

## **No cure for mesothelioma**

Currently, there is no cure for mesothelioma. Pleural mesothelioma is always fatal, and most people do not live more than five years after being diagnosed. However, there is hope that mesothelioma treatments can prolong and increase quality of life for those suffering with the disease.

### **Treatment**

Each year, approximately 3,000 people are diagnosed with mesothelioma, but the number of people living with the disease – the survivors – is continually increasing. Some patients live ten years or longer with treatment. Common treatments include:

- Surgery to remove cancerous tumors
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation

Each patient reacts differently to each treatment, but doctors have found that treatments such as chemotherapy during surgery can slow or stop the growth of cancer cells.

### **Research**

Research and clinical trials continue to advance the fight against mesothelioma. During clinical trials, patients can take advantage of the latest in scientific research to help with their individual battle against cancer.

The National Cancer Institute is currently involved in almost 100 clinical trials involving mesothelioma, and cancer centers around the country are focusing more efforts on treating mesothelioma than ever before. Many of the large pharmaceutical companies do not dedicate funding for mesothelioma research because it is such a rare form of cancer.

### **Focus on early detection**

A lot of focus is being directed toward earlier detection of the disease. Mesothelioma symptoms do not generally show up until 20 to 50 years after exposure to asbestos. Once diagnosed, it is imperative to begin treatment since a broader range of treatment options are available at earlier stages of the disease process.

In recent years, blood-based biomarkers and urine and breath samples are being used in clinical trials to diagnose the disease earlier and in a much less invasive way than biopsies and imaging tests.

Doctors are hopeful that in the future, a mesothelioma diagnosis will mean that you suffer from a treatable chronic illness instead of a life-terminating disease.

## Symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is not an easy cancer to diagnose. Symptoms will not manifest for 20 to 50 years after the first exposure to asbestos fibers. Early diagnosis and treatment is the best chance for prolonging you or your loved one's life with mesothelioma.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of mesothelioma will vary depending on where the cancer originates. The two most common forms of mesothelioma are pleural and peritoneal mesothelioma which form around your lungs or in your abdominal cavity. Common symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Persistent cough
- Abdominal pain or swelling
- Fever

These can be symptoms of other illnesses as well, but with a history of known asbestos exposure, mesothelioma is a possible diagnosis. It is important to test for mesothelioma and asbestosis, a lung disease caused from inhaling asbestos fibers.

### Diagnosis

The most effective test for mesothelioma currently is a biopsy of the suspect area. The doctor will likely begin with a complete physical exam and recommend imaging tests, such as a CT scan or MRI to get detailed pictures of internal organs. Some clinical trials are experimenting with breath and urine tests to detect the disease, but these have not been approved for use in regular medical settings yet.

**Tell your doctor that you have been exposed to asbestos in the past.** Without knowing that you are at-risk for mesothelioma because of asbestos exposure, your doctor may not consider it.

### Treatment

Treatment for mesothelioma is similar to treatment for other cancers. The doctor may recommend radiation, chemotherapy, surgery, or some combination of any of those. If you have been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you should also ask about clinical trials that you could take part in. Clinical trials test the latest in treatment research and can be effective in prolonging your life and providing you with a better quality of life.

## Symptoms of mesothelioma

The symptoms that patients experience from mesothelioma can also be symptoms of many other illnesses. But if you have a history of asbestos exposure, you should seek a medical diagnosis as soon as any of these symptoms appear. Diagnosing and treating mesothelioma early is the best way to ensure that you have the longest, healthiest life possible while dealing with the disease.

### Common symptoms for each type of mesothelioma

Each type of mesothelioma can be recognized by its most common symptoms.

- **Pleural Mesothelioma:** chest pain, shortness of breath, chronic dry cough, weight loss, fever or night sweats, and fatigue.
- **Peritoneal Mesothelioma:** abdominal pain and swelling, nausea or vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, weight loss, and fatigue.
- **Pericardial Mesothelioma:** irregular heartbeat, chest pain, coughing, fever or night sweats, difficulty breathing, and fatigue.
- **Testicular Mesothelioma:** testicular lumps and swelling of the scrotum.

Many of the symptoms of mesothelioma, regardless of the type, are caused by fluid accumulation. Mesothelioma often causes fluid accumulation in the affected area which can cause swelling and discomfort around the effected organs. Not every person will exhibit all symptoms, but if you experience any of the symptoms, it's very important to seek diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible.

### The latency period

The time from first exposure to asbestos until you begin experiencing symptoms of mesothelioma is the latency period of the disease. In most cases, this period is 30 to 40 years, but can vary significantly for each patient. Some patients will notice symptoms within 20 years and for other patients, it is more than 50 years between their asbestos exposure and the development of identifiable symptoms.

This long latency period from exposure to diagnose is widely accepted by physicians who diagnose and treat this disease. A patient may have no symptoms at all during the entire latency period and then symptoms develop which lead a patient to their physician where ultimately a diagnosis is made. It is very important to get diagnosed as early as possible since there are more medical treatments and options available to early stage victims of mesothelioma. Unfortunately, most diagnoses happen in stage III or IV of the cancer, making it very difficult to treat.

## Diagnosing mesothelioma

Diagnosing mesothelioma can be difficult because symptoms can be mistaken for other illnesses. If you know or suspect that you have been exposed to asbestos, **tell your doctor about your asbestos exposure** so he or she will know to test for mesothelioma.

### Typical process for diagnosis

Most people are diagnosed within a few months of the onset of symptoms. Typically, a patient will see their doctor and report shortness of breath or stomach pain. The doctor will take a medical history and conduct a thorough physical examination.

The doctor usually suspects pneumonia or some other relatively benign and more common ailment, but can order more testing when he or she is made aware of the risk for developing mesothelioma due to asbestos exposure. If imaging test results indicate that mesothelioma is present, a biopsy will most likely be ordered to confirm that it is cancer.

During the diagnosis process you will generally work with several doctors: a general practitioner, a pulmonologist, radiologist, surgeon, or oncologist. Getting a second opinion from a specialist who works with asbestos-related diseases is a good way to confirm the diagnosis and get as much information as you can about current treatments and clinical trials.

### Imaging tests

Imaging tests are used to look at your internal body structure without the need for surgery. The doctor may use any of these common imaging tests for diagnosis:

- CT scans
- x-rays
- MRI
- PET scans

A combination of CT and PET scans are considered standard for mesothelioma diagnosis, but all of these imaging tests may be performed when the doctor is trying to determine the cause of your symptoms.

### Biopsies

A biopsy is a more invasive diagnostic tool because it requires surgery. During a biopsy, the doctor will take a small fluid or tissue sample from the tumor to determine whether the growth is malignant. From an examination of this tissue, doctors can usually tell where the cancer originated in the body and what type of cells are involved. This identification helps doctors select the most effective treatment.

### Blood tests

Researchers continue to develop blood tests to detect mesothelioma. Although MESOMARK assay tests have been approved by the FDA, they are not reliable enough to stand on their own. If your doctor performs a blood test, **you should also receive imaging tests and possibly a biopsy to confirm the results** of your blood test.

## Do you need a second opinion?

When you are diagnosed with a cancer, it is always a good idea to get a second opinion. Mesothelioma is such a rare and deadly form of cancer. The best way to fight it is to confirm your diagnosis early.

### Asking your doctor for help

If you started with your general practitioner, they may have already sent you to a specialist to confirm your diagnosis. Many family doctors will enlist the help of an expert if they see anomalies in your imaging tests. And if you live in a metropolitan area, you may already be in contact with a mesothelioma specialist in your area.

Mesothelioma is a very rare disease and if your doctor has not worked with many mesothelioma cases, they may recommend that you seek a second opinion from a doctor with more experience with this very specific disease. And if you want a second opinion, any doctor will be more than happy to guide you toward a good authority for a second opinion on your diagnoses.

### Find a cancer center

If your doctor does not have a good recommendation of where to go for a second opinion, you can [find a mesothelioma expert](#) on your own to confirm your diagnosis. The National Cancer Institute is a good resource for mesothelioma information. You can find a [National Cancer Institute designated cancer center](#) in your area to get a second opinion and talk to someone about treatment and clinical trials that you may be eligible for.

You can also find a lot of information and support on the internet. From information on local cancer centers to online forums, you will find many groups willing to help you and your family through this difficult time.



## Staging mesothelioma

Staging mesothelioma is similar to staging other forms of cancer. Classifying how far mesothelioma has developed allows doctors to identify the treatment options that will be most effective.

### The TNM staging system

The TNM staging system is the most widely accepted and commonly used staging system for pleural mesothelioma (affecting your lungs).

This system was developed by the American Joint Committee on Cancer and adopted by the International Mesothelioma Interest Group as a universally accepted system for staging. The abbreviation TNM stands for the three different parts that make up the diagnosis:

- Tumor – the location and size of the tumor
- Node – whether the lymph nodes have been affected
- Metastasized – whether tumors have spread to other parts of the body

Taking each of these factors into account, the doctor will stage mesothelioma as stage I, IA, IB, II, III, or IV.

### What the stages mean

Each stage comes with a different prognosis. Patients with stage I mesothelioma survive for longer periods of time and respond better to treatment. Each stage can contain variant combinations of tumor, node and metastasizing, but in general, each stage progresses along these lines:

- Stage I is the least serious form. At stage I, there is an identifiable tumor that is localized around the lungs and not spread to the lymph nodes or other parts of your body.
- Stage II is a more advanced form where the mesothelioma has spread through the lining of the lung, the diaphragm, and possibly into the lung.
- Stage III starts to see the spread of cancer into the lymph nodes or other areas of the body.
- Stage IV is the most advanced form in which cancer has spread into the chest wall and to other areas of the body, including the lymph nodes.

Most mesothelioma is diagnosed during stage III or IV, which limits treatment options and decreases the chances of survival. Beyond stage II, surgery is not always a viable treatment option.

## Survival and treatment

Each patient's prognosis will vary greatly depending on many factors, such as age, stage of mesothelioma, and site of cancer. As research for treatments continues to develop, mesothelioma patients are living longer with a better quality of life than ever before, but there is still no cure for this devastating disease.

### Survival rates

In general, most patients with a mesothelioma diagnosis will not survive five years. Many will only last a few months to a year with this aggressive disease. The average survival rate remains at about 10-11 months. Only about 40 percent of patients survive the one year mark.

However, a study conducted by the American Cancer Society reported that 37 percent of patients under the age of 45 were living more than five years after their diagnosis and 20 percent of patients age 45-54 were surviving past five years.

The amount of time you can be expected to live with mesothelioma depends on several factors including:

- Age
- Gender
- Site of cancer
- Stage of cancer
- Cellular makeup of the tumor

Your doctor will discuss the variables as they relate to your diagnosis and available treatments.

### Treatment options

Although research is ongoing, there is currently no cure for mesothelioma. Clinical trials continue to refine available treatments, but in general, treatment options include:

- Surgery to remove the tumor
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy

Depending on the stage of mesothelioma, the doctor may recommend a combination of treatments to remove tumors and fight the spread of cancer throughout the body. Stage I patients may be offered surgery in an attempt to remove the cancerous growth and then go through a course of chemotherapy or radiation therapy or a combination of both to attempt to destroy remaining cancer cells.

In later stages, surgery is usually not be an option because the cancer is too widespread. In these circumstances, chemotherapy and radiation are the only options to fight the disease. For those patients who are not strong enough to undergo surgery, these therapies may also be used.

## **Paying for treatment**

A big concern for almost every person diagnosed with mesothelioma is how to pay for treatment without draining the family's resources.

### **Compensation from the responsible party**

Because most cases of mesothelioma were entirely preventable if you had not been exposed to asbestos, you have legal rights to recover compensation for your injuries. Thousands of people with mesothelioma have received financial awards through asbestos litigation. In addition to compensation for medical bills, you may also be able to recover compensation for:

- lost wages
- pain and suffering
- emotional support

An experienced mesothelioma lawyer can help you file for and recover the compensation you deserve.

### **Health insurance**

Your health insurance will cover some of your costs, but usually not everything. Traditional insurance programs generally cover about 80 percent of your costs, leaving you responsible for the remaining 20 percent. These plans often have a lifetime cap on the maximum amount they will pay out. Medicare works in much the same way. Even if you have an HMO plan that covers "everything," you may still have to pay co-pays and other out-of-pocket expenses.

When talking with your insurance company about your coverage, you should ask about what kind of coverage you have for prescriptions. Medication costs can be significant for mesothelioma patients.

### **Veteran's benefits and other sources**

Asbestos was used by every military branch in some capacity. As a veteran, you can file for Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits. You will need to provide evidence that your mesothelioma is related to asbestos exposure during your military service in order to qualify for veteran's benefits.

You may also have other sources of compensation such as a separate disability insurance policy or disability benefits provided by your state or Social Security. These can help you cover the gap left by your insurance and provide the additional income that you and your family need to cover your treatment expenses.

In consultation with a mesothelioma lawyer, you can learn about the compensation that may be available from the parties responsible for your asbestos exposure.

## Your legal rights

Those that develop mesothelioma after being exposed to asbestos are very likely entitled to compensation for this terrible disease. The amount of compensation you are entitled to receive for your claim depends on many factors, such as life expectancy and medical expenses as well as the manner and method of exposure to asbestos.

### Filing a claim

To receive compensation after a mesothelioma diagnosis, you will need to file a claim for personal injury. The surviving family members who have lost a loved one to mesothelioma can also file a wrongful death claim. A mesothelioma attorney will help you determine the best avenue for recovering compensation because of your asbestos exposure. Options for filing a mesothelioma claim include:

- Litigation
- Bankruptcy trust
- Veterans benefits
- Workers' compensation

Your mesothelioma lawyer will file your claim with the appropriate entity depending on who the responsible party was for your asbestos exposure.

**Even if the company that made the asbestos products that exposed you to asbestos has filed for bankruptcy, you may be able to recover compensation** from the Court Ordered trust fund that was set up as part of that company's reorganization. An experienced mesothelioma attorney can guide you through the process for any of these claim types.

### Trials in New York

If pursuing litigation is the right choice to get you the compensation you need, and it often is, then you can file a claim in Court against the company who is responsible for your exposure to asbestos. You are entitled to seek damages for your medical expenses, lost income, and pain and suffering.

For New York cases involving asbestos exposure, the Court handles claims in an expedited legal process. Generally, the Court will schedule trials for asbestos-related cancer within a year. Your case can be combined or "clustered" with other mesothelioma cases on the motion of your lawyer to speed up the process and reduce the stress on you and your family during the litigation. Your testimony may be taken at your home and preserved for trial.

## Knowing if you have a case and when to file it

Talking with an experienced attorney who handles mesothelioma cases on a regular basis is the best way to find out if you have a claim, what it may be worth, and what steps you need to take to start the legal process.

### Do you have a claim?

Knowing whether you have a legal claim is relatively straightforward. If you can answer yes to these questions, then you are likely entitled to compensation:

- **Were you exposed to asbestos at work?**
- **Did you have second-hand exposure to asbestos?**
- **Have you been diagnosed with mesothelioma?**

Many people are concerned once they receive a mesothelioma diagnosis that there will be no one to hold responsible and pay for their injury since the disease can take 20 to 50 years to present symptoms. The truth is that thousands of victims of asbestos exposure have been able to recover compensation for the development of mesothelioma.

### Who you can recover from

You may be able to recover compensation for your injuries from a variety of sources, including:

- Manufacturer of the asbestos
- Installer of the asbestos
- Asbestos victims' trust fund

Many companies that subjected workers to asbestos are still viable business entities and they can be pursued in Court. Other companies have filed for and declared bankruptcy, but trusts have been set up by them and claims can be made to the trust. Often the bankruptcy Court required a company seeking bankruptcy protection to set aside large sums of money in trust for potential future claimants. If you were exposed to asbestos by one of these companies that has been forced to set up a bankruptcy trust, you may be able to seek compensation from that trust.

### Limitations on when you can file

Each state has enacted statutes of limitations which govern how long you have to file a personal injury claim against another party. Since there are time limitations, it's important to immediately seek out advice on what types of claims to make so that they are timely. Because of the aggressive nature of mesothelioma, you will want to consult an attorney as soon as possible after your diagnosis so that you can begin the process of getting the compensation you deserve.

## **Employer responsibility after asbestos exposure**

Every employer is required to inform workers that they are working with asbestos or in an environment with the risk of asbestos exposure. If you are concerned about asbestos exposure in your current work place, talk with your employer or their designated health and safety representative to understand if appropriate precautions are being taken to prevent asbestos exposure and the development of mesothelioma.

If you have been exposed to asbestos in the workplace, talk to an experienced mesothelioma lawyer about your legal rights and entitlement to compensation.

### **On-the-job protections**

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) regulates the safety measures that should be taken by employers regarding asbestos. In general, employers should provide protection for employees, such as:

- Proper training for working with and around asbestos
- Monitoring of the exposure levels of employees
- Well ventilated workspace
- Protective clothing, like gloves and goggles
- Protective gear, like a respirator
- Warning signs on material containing asbestos, like raw materials, mixtures, and even waste

Employers are required to provide a safe working environment and limit employee exposure to dangerous materials like asbestos. If your employer fails to provide the proper safety precautions, you may have a legal claim against them.

### **After-the-job responsibilities**

Employers can be found responsible for exposing employees to asbestos because it causes mesothelioma. Unfortunately, because of the long latency period of mesothelioma, thirty or forty years may have passed between exposure to asbestos and diagnosis of mesothelioma. Working with an experienced mesothelioma attorney can help you determine what entity or entities could be responsible for your injuries. Based upon the individual facts of your case, you may be able to sue manufacturers of asbestos or asbestos containing products, building owners, contractors and other entities.

In some cases, you can go through the workers' compensation system for your state or seek payment from a mesothelioma victim's trust fund. Your lawyer will investigate your specific situation and work with you to help you get the compensation you deserve for your injuries.

## What is a wrongful death claim?

A wrongful death claim is a legal action that the surviving family can take once a loved one has passed on because of their struggle with mesothelioma.

### What wrongful death means

Any time you lose a loved one it feels wrong, but "wrongful death" is a legal term that means a death that would not have occurred if it weren't for the negligence of someone else. In cases where a loved one succumbed to mesothelioma, they would have never had that cancer if they had not been exposed to asbestos at some point in their life, usually through their work.

Surviving family members can pursue legal action against the responsible parties, which can include:

- the manufacturer of the asbestos material
- manufacturers that incorporated asbestos materials in their finished products
- a distributor of the asbestos material
- contractors that worked with asbestos
- owners of buildings where asbestos was present

Your mesothelioma lawyer will investigate your case and help you to identify who the responsible parties are for the death of your loved one.

### What compensation is available for the family

The family members that are left behind are often left with much more than their grief. You may be dealing with a mountain of medical and other expenses. In a wrongful death action, you can recover compensation for damages, such as:

- Medical costs
- Home care costs
- Funeral expenses
- Emotional distress
- Lost wages
- Lost benefits
- Loss of companionship

A lawyer who regularly handles mesothelioma cases can help you discuss what your options are in this difficult time. Although you may not want to even think about bringing a wrongful death claim after the loss of your loved one, each state puts a time limit on filing these cases. It is important to consult with an attorney immediately so that the claims are not time barred by the applicable statute of limitations. It is important to consult with an experienced mesothelioma attorney who understands what you are going through and who can help you move forward.

## What compensation are you and your family entitled to?

A mesothelioma diagnosis brings a heavy financial burden to the victim of asbestos exposure and their family. For many mesothelioma patients, one of their primary concerns is not draining the family resources. They want their loved ones to have enough money to carry on without worry once they are gone.

### Compensation you can recover

With a mesothelioma claim, you may be entitled to receive compensation for any of the following:

- Medical expenses, including those that are not covered under health insurance
- Lost wages for time away from work and for future wages you won't have the opportunity to earn
- Costs incurred for travel to medical facilities for treatment
- Pain and suffering (for physical and mental distress)
- Support costs for you and your family's mental health
- Funeral expenses

Your loved ones will also be eligible for similar compensation if they file a wrongful death action after your passing or if you pass away during the litigation of your claim. Your lawyer will discuss with you how much your individual case may be worth. Each mesothelioma case is different and your compensation depends on your specific life circumstances.

### Ways to seek compensation

There are several ways that you or your family may get compensation. These include:

- A personal injury lawsuit
- Wrongful death lawsuit
- Workers' compensation
- Bankruptcy trust funds for victims
- Veterans benefits

With either a personal injury or wrongful death lawsuit, your case may settle before trial, meaning that the defendant agrees to pay you a sum and not go to court. If your case does not settle, your lawyer will try to win your case at trial. If you are successful, then the jury will decide how much your claim is worth and reward you a specific amount that the defendant will be obligated to pay. Defendants often appeal any monetary award. Your mesothelioma lawyer will discuss these possible outcomes during your consultation and throughout your case as you any potential weigh settlement offers.



## Records your lawyer will need for your case

In preparing your case, your lawyer will need to investigate when and how you were exposed to asbestos, and he will need details about your diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis to determine what kind of compensation you may be entitled to.

### Work records

Your lawyer will need to know what jobs you had where you could have been exposed to asbestos and what dates you worked in those positions. To prepare for your first meeting with your attorney, try to gather any records you still have from that employer. This can be difficult, since you may have worked there over 20 years ago, but the smallest piece of information can help. Documents that can be useful for your attorney include:

- W-2 forms that show when and where you worked
- Tax filings with the state or the IRS
- Documentation from your employer regarding asbestos exposure
- List of potential witnesses who can verify the asbestos exposure in your job
- Union information about your work environment
- Military records

If you do not have this documentation on hand, your attorney and his staff can make information requests on your behalf during the investigation of your claim. The more information you can provide up front, the better your attorney will understand your case and can more adequately assess the strength of your claim and the amount of compensation you may be entitled to.

### Medical records

Your work records will help your attorney help you to build the liability portion of your case – determining who is responsible for your injuries. Your medical records in addition to your wage records will allow your attorney to prove the amount of compensation you deserve for your injuries. From your first visit to the doctor where you complained of mesothelioma symptoms to the mountain of bills for your treatment, each piece of your medical history will paint the picture of how severely this disease has interrupted your life.

## How you can afford to have your claim investigated, filed, and represented by an experienced attorney

Almost every mesothelioma patient and their family are concerned about money. You are dealing with mounting medical bills that you never expected to face and the tragedy of a devastating diagnosis. The idea of paying an attorney to investigate and represent your claim seems beyond your means. It is not. The Williams Law Firm can help.

### Contingency fee

At The Williams Law Firm, we work on a contingency fee basis. This means that **you do not pay a fee up front**, and you do not pay for our services at an hourly rate. We work hard to settle your claim and win your verdict at trial. And importantly, we won't get paid until you get paid.

If your case is unsuccessful, and we can't recover compensation with your legal action, then you do not owe us a legal fee. We believe in fighting for the rights of victims of asbestos exposure. We are dedicated to fully investigating the claim for each client we represent and making the best legal arguments we can to see that you get the compensation you need and deserve.

We represent clients like you so that we can see justice done.

### Free consultation

The Williams Law Firm also offers a **free consultation**. You can meet with our lead attorney, Joseph P. Williams and our team for free to discuss the merits of your case. You are under no obligation to hire our firm for representation.

During your consultation, we will discuss your medical history, the history of your exposure to asbestos and the legal options that may be available for you to recover compensation for your mesothelioma. Our team will be happy to answer any questions you have about your case and can walk you through what the legal process would look like for you and your family.

Then you can decide whether we are the right legal team to fight for your rights.

## Why you may need a lawyer and how to choose one

Mesothelioma cases are complex. When you are fighting for compensation for injuries that stem from events that occurred a quarter or a half century ago, it can seem like an uphill battle. Having an experienced mesothelioma attorney on your side fighting for you can be the critical factor that helps you get the full compensation that you deserve.

### Do you need a lawyer?

Once you have been diagnosed with mesothelioma, it can be difficult to know what your next step is. A mesothelioma lawyer can **take the stress away** from figuring out your legal rights and work to get you the financial assistance you need while you focus on fighting the cancer in your body.

Investigating your claim and proving your case can be costly and time consuming. An attorney who is experienced with mesothelioma cases knows the right resources to thoroughly investigate your claim without wasting the precious time that you have.

### How to choose your mesothelioma attorney

Choosing the right attorney is an important decision. You want an attorney who you can trust to fight for your rights while you fight for your life. A good mesothelioma attorney is:

- Experienced with mesothelioma and asbestos-related cases
- Knowledgeable about mesothelioma and the effects it has on you
- Knowledgeable about the 3,000 or more products that contained asbestos in the United States and that you may have been exposed to asbestos from
- Knowledgeable and experienced in the local Court system where your case could be filed
- Able to evaluate the merits of your case and provide information about your potential compensation
- Willing to travel to your home at any point if you can't make it to their office

When you are looking for an attorney, you will want to meet with him face-to-face to make sure you feel comfortable and confident with the kind of representation you will get. Make sure to ask questions during your consultation. Your attorney should take the time to make sure your concerns are addressed and that you feel knowledgeable about the legal process and your role in your case.

Your mesothelioma attorney should be there to help you every step of the way. You should feel like you are getting the open and honest communication you deserve throughout the process.

## **The Williams Law Firm, P.C.**

At The Williams Law Firm, P.C. we represent people and we fight for families. Our entire team is dedicated to seeking justice for our clients. No measure is too great and no task is too difficult if it helps our clients as they deal with a diagnosis that is devastating to both the victim and their family. At our firm, we know that this is a time when you need help most as you deal with a disease and its effects on your life. Everything that our entire team does for a client is based upon the premise that the whole process has to be made simple for our clients since they have terrible medical stresses to deal with. We take on as much of the legal burden as possible while our clients deal with their medical issues.

### **About Joseph Williams**

Our lead attorney Joseph P. Williams is an accomplished mesothelioma attorney with a national reputation for championing the rights of asbestos exposure victims and their families. Mr. Williams is based in New York City and also represents clients throughout the United States.

#### **Experience you can trust**

Mr. Williams has more than 20 years of experience as an advocate representing victims in front of juries. He has been a champion for working men and their families helping them to recover needed financial security for their injuries. As the lead trial attorney for major New York City law firms, Mr. Williams has fought for justice for victims of workplace negligence in hundreds of jury cases.

Mesothelioma cases are often clustered together for a group trial and Mr. Williams has successfully tried more than a dozen clustered mesothelioma cases that consisted of up to ten individual claimants in trial against as many as 50 different defendants at the same time. He has been instrumental in getting hundreds of millions of dollars for people who are suffering from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related illnesses.

#### **Representation with compassion**

As a dedicated, long-time advocate of victims of asbestos exposure and their families, Mr. Williams understands the challenges that you and your family face when you are diagnosed with mesothelioma. Mr. Williams and our whole team are committed to providing each client personalized, aggressive representation.

He is an attorney who will listen to your story and give you the honest truth about your case and the compensation you can expect to receive with a legal action. Regardless of where you live, we will travel to your home to meet with you and evaluate your case.

His goal is to reduce your financial stress by getting you the monetary award you need to pay for all of the unexpected medical and other expenses that came with your diagnosis. He wants you to be able to dedicate your precious time and energy to your family and your battle against this deadly disease.

Mr. Williams is admitted to practice in all New York State courts, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern Districts of New York, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mr. Williams is also a contributor to the American Cancer Society and the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation.



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## Support resources for dealing with mesothelioma

Dealing with mesothelioma is more than just fighting the cancer in your system. You may have to battle depression, come to terms with your mortality, have difficult conversations with your family, and make financial decisions about your family's future. It can be too much to ask of one person, which is why you shouldn't have to face your struggles alone.

### Support groups

Developing a support network that you can rely on during this emotionally taxing time will help you process the stress, anger, and confusion that so often come with a mesothelioma diagnosis. You may already have a solid support system through your family, friends, or church, but many mesothelioma patients find it beneficial to join a support group.

In-person support groups fill the need for personal and social interaction. Many patients find new friends and develop strong bonds with other mesothelioma patients and families who are going through similar experiences.

It may not always be possible or ideal for you to travel to a support group meeting. In those cases, you can find a community of people online and by telephone who are available anytime.

There are many cancer support groups out there, like the [Cancer Support Community](#) or [CancerCare](#) where you can find meetings, online chat groups, and the emotional help that you need. Many of these groups will also provide support for family members who are faced with the loss of a loved one.

### Medical assistance

Other than your primary treatment center, you may need additional care at home. Your family can often provide at-home care, but it can be stressful and put strains on your close family relationships. There are a wide range of services that outside caregivers can provide at home. Whether you need a live-in nurse or assistance a few times a week, you should be able to find the right arrangement in your area.

As your health deteriorates, you may need to consider assisted living. This is a conversation you should begin with your family now so that you have a plan going forward.

## Help for stress, depression, and other psychological issues

After your mesothelioma diagnosis, you will spend a significant amount of time dealing with your physical health. You may also need extra help to deal with your mental health. Emotions can run high as you come to terms with your prognosis.

### Understanding your emotions

Coping with your diagnosis and realizing that your future is on a completely different course than you had planned can take their toll on your mental health. You COULD experience the five stages of grief:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Each stage of your grief is important to acknowledge and experience. Your feelings are legitimate and need to be recognized and discussed, but they don't have to take over your life.

Depression and anxiety can start to overshadow everything else in your life. If you begin to experience feelings of sadness or emptiness that last for more than a few days and are coupled with mood swings or fatigue, you may be suffering from clinical depression. You should not be afraid to get yourself professional help. Your oncologist may prescribe anti-depressant medication for you. Feel free to talk with them about your depression and anxiety and whether medication is right for you.

### Talking to someone outside your family

Your family can be a great comfort to you as you process your feelings, but sometimes you need an outside perspective. You may have a good friend, minister, or workout partner who is not so emotionally involved in your circumstances that can listen to your concerns with an open mind.

Some mesothelioma patients find great comfort in joining a support group, either online or in-person. Sometimes talking to someone who is going through the same things you are can make all the difference.

Seeing a therapist can also help tremendously with your outlook on life. A professional will help you address the emotional issues you are experiencing, and they can prescribe anti-depressant medications if you both feel that medication would help you.

## Hospice and other care

Many people think of hospice as the last resort, but it is really a service dedicated to helping you and your family cope with the demands and stresses that at-home care of a terminally ill loved one places on your family.

### Hospice care for mesothelioma patients

Through a team that usually includes a physician, a nurse, a home healthcare aid, a counselor or spiritual person, and a social worker, hospice provides full service compassionate care for patients whose mesothelioma has progressed beyond treatment.

Hospice can offer a variety of services, including:

- Nursing services
- Pain management
- Medical supplies
- Nutrition counseling
- Spiritual support

For mesothelioma patients who are suffering with pleural mesothelioma in particular, hospice workers can help position your body in a way that makes it easier to breathe. They can also customize nutrition plans to make sure you are getting enough fluids and nutrients in your everyday diet. Your hospice care providers may also administer medication to reduce your pain and make you more comfortable.

Beyond the physical, hospice care can also help with emotional aspects by providing counseling or introducing you to support groups. They can also help with end-of-life arrangements, such as advance directives and wills.

If you are interested in how hospice can help you during this difficult time, talk to your doctor about getting a referral to a local hospice care provider.

### Alternative care options

Depending on your receptivity to treatment, you may not be ready for hospice care. Your family may have the ability to meet your care needs at home or with the help of an at-home caregiver. You can also explore assisted living options, which can allow you to be more independent while still getting the time and attention you need.

Each mesothelioma patient has slightly different needs when it comes to supportive medical care. Discussing your options openly with your doctors and your loved ones will help you make the right decisions for you.



## **Discussing the difficult issues with your family: letting them know your wishes**

Advancements are made every day in mesothelioma research, and you may live years beyond the statistics, but mesothelioma is not curable.

### **Talking with your family**

You should make decisions now. It is never easy when faced with a terminal illness to discuss these things with your family, but being proactive in your discussions will ensure that your wishes are known and that your family is not stressed by the decisions that will need to be made later on.

### **Advanced directives**

Advanced directives are exactly what they sound like. They are written forms that allow you to direct how you would like your medical care handled if you should become incapacitated. Executing these forms while you are still feeling well can provide you with the security of knowing that your wishes will be carried out.

A living will allows you to make decisions about your health care, such as if you want to be revived through cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or if you want your life to be sustained with a feeding or breathing tube and for how long.

A power of attorney can be used for health care decisions and your financial affairs. If you would like to put your health care or financial decisions in the hands of a trusted family member, a power of attorney will allow you to transfer that authority. Then you will not need to worry about whether your affairs are being taken care of.

### **Preparing a will**

Almost everyone puts off making a will because no one likes to face their own mortality. Making a will can actually help you feel better since you know how your loved ones will be provided for and that you have set your wishes down in writing.

## Mesothelioma doctors and treatment centers

Finding mesothelioma doctors that you trust and a treatment center where you feel comfortable is vital to treating your cancer and giving you the peace of mind that you are in good hands for your medical care.

You should be able to find a cancer center that specializes in the treatment of mesothelioma in your region. Following is a [list of some of the leading cancer centers](#) around the country.

### Northeast

- Brigham and Women's Hospital (Boston)
- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Tulsa, Phoenix)
- The Cleveland Clinic and Taussig Cancer Institute (Cleveland, Florida, Nevada)
- Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (Boston)
- Fox Chase Cancer Center (Pennsylvania)
- Johns Hopkins Hospitals and the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center (Baltimore)
- Massachusetts General Hospital (Boston)
- Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (New York, New Jersey)
- Mount Sinai Hospital (Manhattan)
- New York Hospital Queens (Queens)
- New York-Presbyterian Hospital (New York)
- New York University Cancer Institute/NY Langone Medical Center (New York)
- The Ohio State University James Cancer Center (Columbus)
- University of Pennsylvania Abramson Cancer Center (Philadelphia)
- University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute and Hillman Cancer Center (Pennsylvania)
- Weill Cornell Medical College (New York)
- Winthrop University Hospital Institute for Cancer Care (New York)

### Southeast

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Tulsa, Phoenix)
- The Cleveland Clinic and Taussig Cancer Institute (Cleveland, Florida, Nevada)
- Duke Cancer Institute (North Carolina)
- Georgia Cancer Specialists (Georgia)
- H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center (Florida)
- Mayo Clinic Cancer Center (Arizona, Florida, Minnesota)

### Midwest

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Tulsa, Phoenix)
- Edward Cancer Center and Multidisciplinary Thoracic Oncology Clinic (Illinois)
- Marquette General Cancer Center (Michigan)
- Mayo Clinic Cancer Center (Arizona, Florida, Minnesota)
- University of Chicago Comprehensive Cancer Center (Chicago)
- University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center (Ann Arbor)

- University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center (Madison)

#### West

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Tulsa, Phoenix)
- The Cleveland Clinic and Taussig Cancer Institute (Cleveland, Florida, Nevada)
- Mayo Clinic Cancer Center (Arizona, Florida, Minnesota)
- Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center (California)
- Stanford Cancer Institute (California)
- University of California-San Francisco Medical Center/UCSF Cancer Research Institute (San Francisco)
- University of Washington Medical Center (Washington)

For more detailed information on any of these cancer centers, see The Williams Law Firm's list of [mesothelioma support and resources](#).