

Asbestos: Fact or Fiction

The District's goal is to ensure every school will be safe, healthy, and free of asbestos exposure concerns. Can you tell the asbestos facts from the fiction?

Asbestos exists in 80% of structures built before 1980.

FACT: Most structures built before 1980 contain asbestos. In Philadelphia, we assume that any school building built before 1989 has asbestos containing materials. Today, the use of asbestos is strictly regulated, and the School District of Philadelphia has processes and controls in place to monitor, manage, and even remove asbestos from buildings in order to keep students safe.

If my child's school has asbestos containing material, s/he is at immediate risk.

FICTION: Asbestos is only dangerous when asbestos containing material is damaged or old and considered friable (meaning it could be crumbled by hand). Asbestos containing material that is in good condition, and cannot be accessed, disturbed or damaged is not an immediate hazard. If you have a concern about something you suspect might be damaged asbestos, please talk to your school's principal immediately. To learn where the asbestos is in the building, review the school's Asbestos Management Plan found in the main office.

Asbestos exposure is linked to a cancer called mesothelioma.

FACT: Airborne asbestos has been linked to mesothelioma as well as lung cancer and asbestosis. That is why it is extremely important to report concerns to your Principal and the school's facilities staff immediately.

The School District of Philadelphia has specific protocols for monitoring, repairing, and removing asbestos from school buildings.

FACT: When possible, we will also remove all materials known to contain asbestos in schools through Capital improvement projects such as major renovations.

The District trains all building operations and maintenance staff to understand asbestos and on how to avoid moving or damaging it. If there are asbestos exposure concerns, a Licensed Asbestos Building Inspector develops a plan to remove or repair it. The plan is electronically provided to the Office of Environmental Management and Services (OEMS). OEMS informs the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, sends out a Licensed Asbestos Project Inspector to the school, and issues a work order to the team of Asbestos Workers to perform the repair or removal. A final report is issued by the Inspector and this is placed into the school's asbestos management plan as a record of the work performed. The plans can be found in the school's main office.

In addition, the District adheres to the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requirements for inspecting schools and preparing plans that make recommendations for the reduction of asbestos hazards. Beyond AHERA, School District Operations staff conduct consistent proactive walk-throughs of every building to monitor the environmental conditions and control or repair them as needed. For more information on asbestos, the District's inspection protocols, and AHERA inspections and reports visit our [asbestos website](#).

As long as you have a mask, you can remove or relocate asbestos yourself.

FICTION: Unless you are a trained asbestos removal profession, you should NEVER attempt to remove or otherwise disturb asbestos containing material. If you have a concern at your school, report to your school's principal immediately. If you want to know where the asbestos containing material is in your school building, review the asbestos management plan which can be found in the school's main office.

Asbestos is everywhere.

FACT: Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral and is all around us. It has been used in construction of homes and commercial buildings, vehicles and thousands of consumer products. Unless exposed to damaged, airborne asbestos consistently for a prolonged amount of time, the risk of asbestos is minimal.
