Family Guide to Understanding Mesothelioma, Lung Cancer & Asbestos

A Comprehensive Resource for Patients and Families

Based on 40+ Years of Legal Experience
Representing Patients with Mesothelioma
and Asbestos-Related Disease

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CPR, along with qualified co-counsel, represents clients throughout the United States.

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PREFACE

A diagnosis of mesothelioma or asbestos-related lung cancer can be daunting. Families are unexpectedly faced with difficult questions about medical care, legal rights, and what the future holds.

The information presented is based on over 40 years of representing people affected by asbestos-related disease. In this guide, we provide information concerning an overview of your legal rights to help you make informed choices. How the law applies to your individual circumstances is beyond the scope of this guide. The information provided is not a substitute for legal advice you receive from in-depth conversations with your lawyer. The objective here is to provide you with a practical framework so you can evaluate your next steps.

While we have extensive experience helping people with mesothelioma and lung cancer, we are lawyers, not doctors. The medical information outlined here stems from our extensive research, ongoing consultations with leading medical experts, and analysis of published medical literature. Our goal is to help you understand your options so you can ask informed questions when speaking with your healthcare team.

Every patient's situation is unique, and treatment decisions should be made with qualified medical professionals who know your specific circumstances. By sharing the information in this guide, we aim to empower patients and their families to make well-informed decisions concerning their healthcare and legal rights.

No one should face this journey alone. It is our hope that this book guides you in making choices that reflect your needs, securing adequate support, and understanding that justice and financial resources are available.

PART I

Understanding Mesothelioma and Asbestos

CHAPTER 1

What Is Mesothelioma?

What you need to know

Through decades of representing mesothelioma patients, we have learned that understanding this disease is the first step toward making informed decisions. Mesothelioma is a rare and aggressive cancer that affects the lining of vital organs, most often the lungs. Unlike lung cancer, which starts inside the lung tissue and may arise due to a variety of causes unrelated to asbestos exposure, mesothelioma is almost always caused by exposure to asbestos fibers.

Types of Mesotheliomas

Mesothelioma	Affected Area	Approximate % of Cases	Notes
Pleural Mesothelioma	Lining around the lungs	~75%	Most common form in our practice
Peritoneal Mesothelioma	Lining of the abdomen	~15% to 20%	
Pericardial Mesothelioma	Lining around the heart	<1%	Extremely rare
Testicular Mesothelioma	Lining around the testicles	Very rare	Extremely rare

Latency Period

Based on our clients' experiences, mesothelioma often develops 15 to 50 years after asbestos exposure. Many people diagnosed today were first exposed decades ago—in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s—while working in shipyards, construction sites, manufacturing plants, or other industrial environments. Others have been exposed through asbestos-contaminated products, such as talc-based powders.

Key takeaway: Mesothelioma is rare, but its causes are well known. If you or a loved one worked with or around asbestos, it’s important to recognize the risks and discuss screening with your healthcare professional.

CHAPTER 2

Pleural Mesothelioma

Pleural mesothelioma forms in the pleura—the thin membrane that lines the lungs and chest wall. This is the type of mesothelioma most commonly diagnosed.

Symptoms

Based on what our clients report, a review of their medical records, and the reported medical literature, common symptoms include:

Symptom	Description
Shortness of breath	Difficulty breathing during activity or rest.
Chest pain or tightness	Discomfort in the chest area.
Persistent cough	Ongoing coughing that doesn't go away.
Fatigue & weight loss	Feeling tired and losing weight without reason.
Pleural effusion	Fluid buildup in the chest.

These symptoms can resemble minor health issues and may be overlooked. If you have a history of asbestos exposure and experience these symptoms, tell your doctor immediately.

Diagnosis

In the medical records we review for legal cases and discussions with experts, we often see that doctors use these common tests to help diagnose mesothelioma:

Diagnostic Tool	Purpose
Chest X-rays & CT scans	Identify tumors or detect fluid buildup in the lungs or chest.
PET scans / MRIs	Assess whether the disease has spread to other parts of the body.
Pulmonary Function Tests (PFTs)	Measure lung capacity and evaluate breathing difficulties.

Biopsy (definitive test)	Confirms the presence of mesothelioma by analyzing tissue under a microscope.

Your doctor may perform any of the following biopsies to help confirm a diagnosis:

Biopsy Type	Description
Thoracentesis	A procedure to remove excess fluid from the chest using a thin needle. Helps relieve symptoms and may provide cells for testing.
Needle Biopsy	A needle is inserted through the chest wall to collect tissue from the lung or pleura for examination. Minimally invasive.
Thoracoscopy (VATS)	A small camera and instruments are inserted through small chest incisions to directly view the pleura and collect tissue samples. Offers high accuracy.

Treatment Options

Based on published medical literature and expert testimony in our cases, treatment typically includes:

Treatment Type	Purpose	More Info
Surgery	Removes tumors or drains fluid to relieve symptoms or improve outcomes.	Discussed in Chapter 10
Chemotherapy	Uses drugs like cisplatin and pemetrexed (Alimta) to target cancer cells.	Discussed in Chapter 11
Radiation Therapy	Helps shrink tumors and relieve pain in affected areas.	Discussed in Chapter 12
Immunotherapy	Newer drugs like nivolumab and ipilimumab that boost the immune system’s ability to fight cancer.	
Clinical Trials	Experimental therapies being tested but not yet FDA-approved.	

When faced with a diagnosis, it’s completely natural to have questions for your doctor. The following questions may help guide your conversation:

- What stage is my mesothelioma?

- Am I a candidate for surgery?
- What are the risks and benefits of chemotherapy or immunotherapy for my specific situation?
- Are there clinical trials available that I should consider?
- Should I get a second opinion from a mesothelioma specialist?

CHAPTER 3

Peritoneal Mesothelioma

Peritoneal mesothelioma develops in the peritoneum—the lining of the abdomen. While less common than pleural mesothelioma, we've represented many clients with this diagnosis.

Symptoms

Based on what our clients report and consultations with experts, common symptoms include:

Symptom	Description
Abdominal pain or swelling	Discomfort or visible distention in the stomach area.
Bloating or feeling full quickly	Sensation of fullness after eating small amounts; can indicate fluid buildup.
Nausea, vomiting, or bowel changes	Digestive issues such as queasiness, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation.
Unexplained weight loss	Losing weight without changes in diet or activity.
Fluid buildup in the abdomen (ascites)	Accumulation of fluid that causes swelling and pressure in the abdominal area.

Diagnosis

Doctors use these common tests to diagnose mesothelioma:

Procedure	Description	Purpose
CT Scan Ultrasound	Imaging techniques to visualize internal structures in the abdomen	Detect tumors, fluid accumulation, or abnormalities
Paracentesis	Insertion of a needle into the abdominal cavity to remove fluid for testing	Analyze ascitic fluid for infection, cancer, or other causes
Biopsy	Removal of tissue, often via laparoscopy, for microscopic examination	Confirm diagnosis, especially for cancer or other pathology

Treatment

Based on medical literature and expert testimony:

Surgery with heated chemotherapy (HIPEC) – This stands for Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy. Surgeons remove all visible tumors from the abdomen and then circulate heated chemotherapy drugs directly inside the abdominal cavity. This approach has significantly extended survival for many peritoneal mesothelioma patients, with some living for years after treatment.

- Systemic chemotherapy – Chemotherapy given through an IV that travels throughout the body.
- Palliative procedures – Treatments to drain fluid and ease pain, even if they don't treat the cancer itself.

> *Important note: Not all patients are candidates for HIPEC surgery. It requires that the disease be confined to the abdomen and that the patient be healthy enough for major surgery. Your oncologist and a specialized surgical oncologist will determine eligibility.*

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Am I eligible for HIPEC surgery? If not, why not?
- Are there centers that specialize in this procedure?
- How effective is chemotherapy alone for my specific case?
- What can be done to control swelling and pain?
- What is the realistic prognosis with and without surgery?

CHAPTER 4

Pericardial Mesothelioma

Pericardial mesothelioma forms in the pericardium—the protective sac around the heart. This is the rarest form of mesothelioma, and we've seen very few cases in our decades of practice.

Symptom	Description
Chest Pain	Often severe; may indicate heart-related issues or other thoracic conditions
Shortness of Breath	Especially noticeable when lying down (orthopnea); may suggest heart failure
Irregular Heartbeat / Palpitations	Sensation of a racing, fluttering, or irregular heartbeat
Swelling of Legs or Abdomen	Known as edema; can result from fluid buildup due to poor heart function
Extreme Fatigue	Persistent tiredness, often due to insufficient oxygen or nutrient delivery

Diagnosis

Diagnostic Challenge	Description
Symptoms Mimic Heart Disease	Chest pain, shortness of breath, and fatigue can resemble common cardiac conditions, leading to misdiagnosis.
Difficult Biopsy Location	The anatomical location (e.g., pericardium or mediastinum) makes tissue sampling invasive or risky.
Often Diagnosed Postmortem	In some cases, the condition is so subtle or progresses so rapidly that it is only identified during autopsy.

When diagnosed in living patients, doctors use imaging tools to assess the heart and surrounding structures. An echocardiogram helps detect fluid buildup or thickening around the heart, while MRI or CT scans provide more detailed views of any masses or abnormalities. A biopsy may be performed to confirm the diagnosis, but only when it can be done safely.

Treatment

Based on published medical data, surgery is rarely an option due to the heart's location and the aggressive nature of the disease. Chemotherapy and radiation may help slow its progression, while palliative care focuses on draining fluid from around the heart and managing symptoms. In our experience, pericardial mesothelioma has the poorest prognosis of all types, but palliative care can greatly improve patient comfort and quality of life.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- What treatment options are available given the location around my heart?
- Can anything be done to relieve the fluid buildup and breathing problems?
- What palliative care services can help me maintain quality of life?
- Are there any clinical trials specifically for pericardial mesothelioma?

CHAPTER 5

Testicular Mesothelioma

Testicular mesothelioma begins in the lining around the testicles (called the tunica vaginalis). This is extremely rare—we've handled very few of these cases in our 40+ years of practice.

Symptoms

Symptom	Description
Swelling or Lump in Scrotum	Visible or palpable enlargement or mass
Pain or Heaviness	Discomfort or sensation of weight in scrotum
Fluid Buildup Around Testicle	Accumulation of fluid causing swelling (hydrocele)

Diagnosis

Based on medical literature, this condition is often mistaken for more common testicular issues such as hernias or benign cysts. It is usually discovered unexpectedly during surgery performed for another suspected problem. A definitive diagnosis is made only through pathological examination of biopsy tissue.

Treatment

Surgery to remove the affected testicle, known as orchiectomy, is the primary treatment for testicular cancer. If the disease has spread beyond the testicle, chemotherapy or radiation therapy may be recommended. After treatment, close monitoring is essential, as recurrence can occur, and early detection is key to successful management.

Prognosis

Because testicular mesothelioma is so rare, there's limited data on long-term outcomes. Some patients have had good outcomes after surgery, especially when the disease is caught early and hasn't spread.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Has the mesothelioma spread beyond the testicle?
- Will I need chemotherapy or radiation after surgery?
- How often should I be monitored for recurrence?
- Can you connect me with specialists who have experience with this rare diagnosis?

CHAPTER 6

What Is Asbestos?

Over decades of investigating asbestos exposure cases, we've gathered extensive knowledge about this hazardous material. Asbestos refers to a group of naturally occurring minerals composed of tiny, microscopic fibers. These fibers are heat-resistant, strong, and flexible, which led to asbestos being widely used in construction and industry from the 1940s through the 1970s.

Common Uses of Asbestos:

Based on thousands of cases we've handled, asbestos was commonly found in:

Insulation: Pipes, boilers, ducts.

- Shipbuilding: Materials in virtually every U.S. Navy ship built before 1980.

Automotive Parts: Brake pads, clutches, gaskets.

- Construction Materials: Roofing shingles, floor tiles, cement, drywall compounds.
- Textiles: Firefighter gear, heat-resistant clothing.

Industrial Equipment: Turbines, furnaces, kilns.

- Consumer Products: Talc-based products contaminated with asbestos.

How People are Exposed

Occupational Exposure is the most common source of asbestos contact. High-risk jobs include:

Shipyard workers (especially Navy veterans)

Construction workers and demolition crews

Pipefitters and plumbers

Electricians

Mechanics (particularly those working on brakes)

Insulation installers

Roofers

Boilermakers and welders

Factory workers in plants that manufactured or used asbestos products

Secondary (Take-Home) Exposure

Family members, especially wives and children—can be exposed to asbestos fibers brought home on work clothes, in hair, or on skin. We've represented many spouses and children who developed mesothelioma as a result of this type of exposure.

Environmental Exposure

People living near asbestos mines, processing plants, or factories, as well as those in buildings with deteriorating asbestos materials, can be exposed to harmful fibers.

Demolition and Renovation:

Tearing down or disturbing old buildings often releases asbestos fibers into the air, putting workers and nearby residents at risk.

Talc-Based Products

Certain talc products, including some cosmetics, may have been unknowingly contaminated with asbestos, leading to exposure.

Health problems linked to asbestos

From medical records and expert testimony in our cases:

Asbestos-Related Disease

- Asbestosis: Scarring of lung tissue that makes breathing difficult. It's not cancer but is a serious, chronic lung disease.
- Pleural Plaques and Thickening: Scarring of the lung lining. Usually not harmful by itself but serves as a marker of asbestos exposure. In more advanced stages can cause breathing problems.
- Pleural Effusion: Fluid buildup around the lungs that can cause discomfort and breathing issues.
- Lung Cancer: Risk is significantly higher for asbestos-exposed individuals who also smoke—together, asbestos and smoking multiply the risk.
- Mesothelioma: A highly aggressive cancer affecting the linings of organs such as the lungs and abdomen, and the most severe asbestos-related disease.

> *Key takeaway: Even brief exposure to asbestos can be dangerous. The fibers are so small they can't be seen, and once inhaled, they stay in the body forever. Disease can develop decades later. If you worked with or around asbestos, tell your doctor, even if you feel fine now.*

CHAPTER 7

Pleural Effusion

From medical records we review regularly and consultation with our experts, pleural effusion is one of the most common complications of mesothelioma.

What It Is

Pleural effusion happens when fluid accumulates between the lungs and the chest wall in the pleural space. Although it can result from various conditions—such as heart failure, pneumonia, or cancer—it is especially common in cases of pleural mesothelioma.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Chest X-ray, CT scan, or ultrasound to detect and measure the fluid.

Thoracentesis – A procedure where doctors insert a needle through the chest wall to remove and test the fluid.

Treatment	Description
Thoracentesis (drainage)	Provides immediate relief by draining fluid, but the fluid often returns
Pleurodesis	Procedure where talc or another agent is inserted to seal the pleural space and prevent fluid buildup
PleurX Catheter	A small tube placed in the chest allowing patients or caregivers to drain fluid at home
Treating the Underlying Cause	Includes chemotherapy for mesothelioma, antibiotics for infections, and other targeted treatments

Questions to ask your doctor:

- What's causing the fluid buildup in my case?
- How often will the fluid need to be drained?

- Am I a candidate for pleurodesis to prevent recurrence?
- Would a PleurX catheter help manage this at home?

CHAPTER 8

Shortness of Breath

Nearly all of our mesothelioma clients report experiencing shortness of breath (known medically as dyspnea). According to both their accounts and medical literature, it is among the most troubling and uncomfortable symptoms.

Causes

In mesothelioma and asbestos-related diseases:

Tumors pressing on the lungs

Fluid buildup around the lungs (pleural effusion)

Scaring from asbestosis

The cancer affecting the lung lining

Other medical conditions (heart disease, COPD, asthma)

How it feels

Our clients describe it as:

Struggling to get enough air

Feeling like breathing through a straw

Tightness or pressure in the chest

Needing to work much harder than usual to breathe

Anxiety or panic that comes with not being able to breathe well

What helps

Based on medical literature and our clients' experiences:

Medical treatments:

- Draining fluid from around the lungs
- Oxygen therapy at home or portable oxygen
- Medications (bronchodilators, steroids in some cases)
- Treating the underlying cancer with chemotherapy or other therapies

Non-medical strategies:

- Using a small fan to blow air across your face (many patients find this surprisingly helpful)
- Sitting upright or leaning forward slightly
- Breathing techniques: slow, deep breaths through the nose and out through pursed lips
- Relaxation and meditation to reduce anxiety
- Avoiding smoke, strong fumes, and air pollution
- Energy conservation (planning activities, taking breaks)

When to seek emergency help:

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you experience:

- Sudden, severe shortness of breath
- Chest pain along with difficulty breathing
- Blue lips or fingernails
- Confusion or inability to speak
- Signs of a heart attack (pressure in chest, arm pain, sweating)

Questions to ask your doctor:

- What's causing my shortness of breath?
- Can fluid drainage or other procedures help?
- Would oxygen therapy benefit me?

- Are there pulmonary rehabilitation programs that could help?
- What should I do if my breathing suddenly gets much worse?

PART II

Treatments for Mesothelioma and Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

CHAPTER 9

Overview of Treatment Options

As lawyers, not doctors, the treatment information provided here is drawn from medical literature reviewed during legal cases, expert testimony from healthcare professionals, and insights from our clients' experiences. Our goal is to help you understand the available treatment options so you can have informed conversations with your oncologist and medical team. Ultimately, all treatment decisions should be made in consultation with qualified healthcare professionals.

A mesothelioma or asbestos-related lung cancer diagnosis is overwhelming. One of the first questions families ask is: "What can we do?"

The good news: Based on medical literature, treatment has improved dramatically in the last two decades. While there is no universal cure, patients today live longer and with better quality of life than in the past. Doctors now use what's called a multimodal approach—meaning they combine surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, and newer therapies such as immunotherapy.

Understanding Mesothelioma Treatment

Treatment is not one-size-fits-all.

Your eligibility for specific treatments depends on several factors, including your age, overall health, the stage of the disease, and the type of mesothelioma. What works well for one patient may not be right for another.

Treatments are often combined.

Many patients receive a combination of therapies—such as surgery followed by chemotherapy, or chemotherapy with immunotherapy—to improve effectiveness.

Supportive and palliative care matter.

These treatments don't target the cancer itself but help manage symptoms and improve comfort. They're important at every stage of care, even alongside aggressive treatment.

Goals of treatment vary.

Some treatments aim to cure or extend life significantly. Others focus on relieving symptoms and maintaining the best possible quality of life.

Seek a second opinion.

Because mesothelioma is rare, we strongly recommend consulting specialists at major cancer centers who have experience treating this disease.

CHAPTER 10

Surgery

According to medical expert testimony in our cases, surgery is a treatment option often considered by doctors. A beneficial outcome is more likely for patients who are in good overall health and whose cancer has not spread extensively.

Pleural Mesothelioma

Involves removing the pleura (the lining around the lung) and as much visible tumor as possible

Preserves the lung, unlike more aggressive surgeries. Generally, less invasive than an extra pleural pneumonectomy

Can help relieve symptoms such as chest pain and shortness of breath

May also help extend survival in eligible patients

Recovery time typically ranges from several weeks to a few months.

Extrapleural Pneumonectomy (EPP)

A more aggressive surgery that may involve removing the pleura (lung lining), part of the diaphragm, and sometimes the pericardium (lining around the heart)

Typically reserved for select patients in good health, treated at specialized mesothelioma centers

Carries higher risks, but may offer potential benefits for carefully chosen candidates

Involves a longer and more intensive recovery period compared to other surgical options

Used less frequently today, as newer, less invasive approaches like Pleurectomy/Decortication (P/D) have become more common

Palliative Surgeries

These procedures do not aim to cure mesothelioma but are performed to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life, especially in advanced stages:

- Thoracentesis – A minimally invasive procedure to drain excess fluid from around the lungs, easing breathing and reducing chest discomfort
- Pleurodesis – A procedure that seals the space between the lung and chest wall to prevent fluid from building up again
- Video-Assisted Thoracic Surgery (VATS) – A less invasive surgical technique used for diagnosis, biopsy, or to manage symptoms, such as removing fluid or small tumors.

Peritoneal Mesothelioma

Cytoreductive Surgery with HIPEC (Heated Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy):

Based on medical literature and expert testimony, this is the most effective treatment for peritoneal mesothelioma when the patient is eligible.

The procedure

Surgeons start by removing all visible tumors from the abdominal cavity. After that, heated chemotherapy drugs are circulated inside the abdomen for about 90 minutes. The heat improves the chemotherapy's ability to penetrate tissue and destroy any remaining cancer cells.

Results from published studies

This method has greatly improved survival for some patients, with a number living for several years after treatment. However, it's only suitable for patients in good health and whose cancer is limited to the abdominal area. The procedure is extensive, involves a substantial recovery period, and is available only at specialized centers.

Pericardial or Testicular Mesothelioma

For pericardial mesothelioma, surgery is rarely an option because of the tumor's location around the heart, which makes surgical access difficult and risky. In contrast, testicular mesothelioma is typically treated with surgery, with removal of the affected testicle (orchiectomy) being the standard approach.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Based on my specific situation, am I a candidate for surgery?
- What type of surgery would you recommend and why?
- What are the risks and benefits for someone with my health status?
- How long is recovery, and what quality of life can I expect afterward?
- Should I get a consultation at a specialized center that performs many of these surgeries?
- What happens if I choose not to have surgery?

CHAPTER 11

Chemotherapy

What it is

Chemotherapy involves using medications that target and kill fast-growing cells, including cancer cells. According to medical literature, it is a standard treatment option for mesothelioma.

Cisplatin + Pemetrexed (Alimta®):

This combination is the most common first-line chemotherapy for mesothelioma and is FDA-approved specifically for this disease. Clinical trials have demonstrated that it improves survival and helps relieve symptoms compared to older treatments. Chemotherapy is typically administered in cycles, with treatment days followed by periods of rest to allow the body to recover.

Carboplatin:

Carboplatin may be used as a substitute for cisplatin when patients cannot tolerate cisplatin's side effects. It generally causes fewer kidney and nerve-related issues. While it might be slightly less effective, it is often better tolerated by patients.

How it's given

Chemotherapy is usually delivered through an intravenous (IV) infusion, which involves administering the medicine into a vein over several hours. Treatments are given in cycles—typically one day of treatment followed by 2 to 3 weeks of rest to allow the body to recover. This is usually done in an outpatient setting, such as a cancer center or hospital infusion suite. The initial course often includes 4 to 6 cycles, after which doctors assess how well the treatment works.

Common Side Effects

From medical literature and our clients' experiences:

Side Effect	Description
Fatigue	Often the most significant and common side effect
Nausea and vomiting	Usually well-controlled with anti-nausea medications
Hair loss	More common with certain chemotherapy drugs
Loss of appetite	Can affect nutrition and energy levels
Increased risk of infection	Chemotherapy lowers white blood cell counts, raising infection risk
Neuropathy	Numbness or tingling in hands and feet, especially with cisplatin
Kidney problems	Possible with cisplatin; requires careful monitoring

> *Important: Most side effects are temporary and go away after treatment ends. Your oncology team will monitor you carefully and has medications to manage many side effects.*

For Peritoneal Mesothelioma

In addition to standard IV chemotherapy:

HIPEC (Heated Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy):

This treatment delivers chemotherapy directly into the abdomen during surgery, allowing a higher concentration of the drug to reach tumors while minimizing exposure to the rest of the body. It is typically given as a one-time treatment during cytoreductive surgery.

For Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

Standard regimens may include:

Platinum-based drugs, such as cisplatin or carboplatin, are often used in combination with other chemotherapy agents like paclitaxel, gemcitabine, or vinorelbine. These drug combinations may be given before surgery to shrink tumors, after surgery to help prevent recurrence, or as the primary treatment when surgery is not an option.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- What specific chemotherapy drugs will I receive and why?
- How many cycles do you recommend?
- How will chemotherapy affect my daily life?
- What side effects should I expect, and which ones require immediate medical attention?
- How will you know if the chemotherapy is working?
- What happens if this regimen doesn’t work—are there other options?

CHAPTER 12

Radiation Therapy

What it is

Radiation therapy uses high-energy beams (usually X-rays) to kill cancer cells or shrink tumors.

Uses in Mesothelioma

Based on medical literature and expert testimony:

- After surgery: Radiation therapy may be used after surgery to kill any remaining cancer cells in the surgical area. It is often part of a multimodal treatment plan, combined with surgery and/or chemotherapy. In some cases, it may also help prevent local recurrence of the disease.
- For symptom control: Radiation therapy can be used to shrink tumors that are causing pain or pressing on nearby structures. It may help relieve breathing difficulties by reducing pressure on the airways and can also lessen chest pain, improving overall comfort and quality of life.
- Palliative radiation: Radiation therapy is very effective for controlling pain, even when a cure isn't possible. It can be precisely targeted to specific painful areas, providing relief and improving quality of life for patients with advanced diseases.
- Important limitation: Radiation is rarely used alone to cure mesothelioma because the disease often spreads across large areas of the chest lining, making it difficult to treat everything without damaging healthy tissue.

Types of Radiation

External Beam Radiation

- Beams directed at the tumor from outside the body
- Similar to getting an X-ray but stronger and more focused
- Usually given 5 days a week for several weeks
- Each session takes only a few minutes
- Painless during treatment

Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT)

- More precise, computer-guided radiation
- Better targets tumors while sparing healthy tissue
- Increasingly common at specialized centers

Side Effects

From medical literature:

- Fatigue (usually builds up over weeks of treatment)
- Skin irritation or redness in the treated area (like a sunburn)
- Difficulty swallowing (if chest area is treated)
- Shortness of breath (can get worse temporarily)
- Esophagitis (inflammation of the esophagus) if that area is in the radiation field

> *Side note: Most side effects improve within weeks after treatment ends.*

In Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

Radiation therapy plays a larger role in lung cancer treatment than in mesothelioma. It is often combined with chemotherapy—known as chemoradiation—to improve outcomes. Radiation may also serve as the main treatment when surgery isn't an option, be used before surgery to shrink tumors, or after surgery to eliminate

Questions to ask your doctor:

- What is the goal of radiation in my case—cure, control, or symptom relief?
- How many treatments will I need and over what time period?
- What side effects should I expect, and how long will they last?
- How will you protect my heart and lungs from radiation damage?
- Can I continue my normal activities during radiation treatment?

CHAPTER 13

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy represents one of the most significant advances in mesothelioma treatment in recent years. From medical literature we've reviewed, this is genuinely offering hope where little existed before.

What it is

Immunotherapy works by helping your immune system recognize and attack cancer cells. Unlike chemotherapy, which directly kills cancer cells, immunotherapy teaches your body's own immune system to fight the cancer.

Nivolumab (Opdivo®) + Ipilimumab (Yervoy®):

FDA-approved in 2020 for mesothelioma patients who cannot have surgery

These are both checkpoint inhibitors, they block proteins that stop immune cells from attacking cancer

Clinical trials showed this combination extends survival compared to chemotherapy alone

Given by IV infusion, usually every 3 weeks

From the CheckMate 743 trial published in medical literature:

Median survival improved to 18.1 months with immunotherapy vs. 14.1 months with chemotherapy

Particularly effective in certain mesothelioma subtypes

How Checkpoint Inhibitors Work

Based on medical literature:

- Cancer cells can hide from the immune system using “checkpoint” proteins
- These proteins act like brakes on immune cells, telling them “don’t attack.”
- Checkpoint inhibitors release these brakes
- Your immune system’s T cells can then recognize and destroy cancer cells

Other Promising Drugs

Pembrolizumab (Keytruda®):

Another checkpoint inhibitor currently in clinical trials for mesothelioma

Already FDA-approved for lung cancer

Some trials combining it with chemotherapy or other drugs

Early results are encouraging

Side Effects

Because immunotherapy activates the immune system, it can cause the immune system to attack healthy tissue. From medical literature

Common Side Effects

- Fatigue
- Skin rash or itching
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite

Less Common

Inflammation in the lungs (pneumonitis)

Inflammation in the liver (hepatitis)

Inflammation in the colon (colitis)

Inflammation in other organs (thyroid, pituitary gland, kidneys)

These serious side effects are less common than with chemotherapy but can be severe when they occur. Your doctors will monitor you carefully with blood tests and imaging.

> *Important Difference from Chemotherapy*

Side effects can occur weeks or months after starting treatment

May require treatment with steroids to calm down the immune system

Some immune-related side effects can be permanent

In Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

Immunotherapy has revolutionized lung cancer care even more than mesothelioma.

From medical literature:

FDA-approved drugs include:

Pembrolizumab (Keytruda®)

Nivolumab (Opdivo®)

Atezolizumab (Tecentriq®)

Durvalumab (Imfinzi®)

Used in various ways:

Alone as first-line treatment (for some patients with high PD-L1 expression)

Combined with chemotherapy

After chemotherapy and radiation for certain lung cancers

Many lung cancer patients now live for years on immunotherapy

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Am I a good candidate for immunotherapy based on my mesothelioma type and overall health?
- Should my tumor be tested for PD-L1 expression or other biomarkers?
- What are the specific risks compared to chemotherapy for someone with my health conditions?
- How will you monitor me for immune-related side effects?
- Are there clinical trials combining immunotherapy with other treatments?
- If immunotherapy works, how long will I continue treatment?

- Chapter 14: Tumor Treating Fields (TTFields)

  In 2019, the FDA approved a device called NovoTTF-100L specifically for pleural mesothelioma. This represents a genuinely new approach to cancer treatment.

What it is

Based on FDA approval documents and medical literature:

A wearable device that delivers low intensity, alternating electrical fields to disrupt cancer cell division

The fields interfere with cancer cells when they’re trying to divide, preventing them from multiplying

Does not affect non-dividing healthy cells

Patients wear adhesive patches (called transducer arrays) on the skin of the chest, connected to a portable battery pack

How it's used

Worn at least 18 hours per day for best results

Used in combination with chemotherapy (usually pemetrexed-based regimens)

Treatment continues as long as it's helping and tolerable

Patches are replaced every few days

Clinical Trial Results

From the STELLAR Trial Published in Medical Literature:

Combination of TTFields plus chemotherapy extended median survival to 18.2 months vs. 14.7 months with chemotherapy alone

Progression-free survival (time before disease worsens) was also improved

Most benefit seen in epithelioid mesothelioma (the most common type)

Benefits

Non-invasive—no surgery or IV infusions

Can be used at home

Adds to effectiveness of chemotherapy without adding typical chemotherapy side effects

Patients can continue daily activities while wearing it

Considerations and Side Effects

From medical literature and patient reports

Common Side Effects

Skin irritation where patches are placed (redness, itching)

Occasionally skin breakdown or ulcers at patch sites

Can usually be managed by moving patch placement slightly

Practical Challenges

Must be worn most of the day to be effective (18+ hours recommended)

Battery packs (weigh about 2.7 pounds) must be carried or worn

Shaving the chest area where patches are placed (to ensure contact)

Need to disconnect temporarily for showers

May affect body image and intimacy

Travel considerations (TSA screening procedures)

Cost and Access

Covered by Medicare and most insurance for approved indications

Company (Novocure) provides support services to help with insurance and training

Requires prescription and training on proper use.

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Is TTFields appropriate for my type and stage of mesothelioma?
- Will it be used along with my chemotherapy regimen?
- How do I manage skin irritation if it occurs?
- What kind of training and support will I receive?
- How do I know if it's working?
- Are there situations where I should stop using it?

CHAPTER 15

Targeted Therapies and Gene Therapies

These treatments aim to attack cancer more precisely than traditional chemotherapy. While fewer options exist for mesothelioma than for some other cancers, research continues.

Angiogenesis Inhibitors

Bevacizumab (Avastin®):

From medical literature:

Blocks VEGF, a protein that helps tumors grow new blood vessels

Tumors need blood vessels to grow and spread

Sometimes combined with chemotherapy in lung cancer

Being studied in mesothelioma trials

Side effects can include high blood pressure, bleeding problems, and delayed wound healing

Targeted Therapy in Lung Cancer

For asbestos-related lung cancer, targeted therapies are more developed. If you have lung cancer, your oncologist may test your tumor for specific genetic mutations:

EGFR Mutations:

Drugs like erlotinib, gefitinib, or osimertinib target these mutations

Oral pills taken daily

Highly effective when the right mutation is present

ALK Rearrangements

Drugs like alectinib or crizotinib target this abnormality

Oral medications

Can control disease for months or years

Other Targets

ROS1, BRAF, MET, RET, and others

Each has specific targeted drugs

CAR T-Cell Therapy

From medical literature and clinical trial data we've reviewed extensively:

What It Is

CAR-T, or Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy, is a type of immunotherapy in which a patient's own T cells are genetically modified by doctors. These reprogrammed T cells are engineered to recognize and attack mesothelioma cells specifically, helping the immune system target the cancer more effectively.

How It Works

CAR T-cell therapy involves collecting T cells from your blood through a process called leukapheresis. These cells are then sent to a lab, where they are genetically engineered to recognize mesothelin, a protein commonly found on mesothelioma cells. Once modified, the T cells are multiplied into millions of cancer-fighting cells and then infused back into your body, where they seek out and destroy mesothelioma cells.

Current Status for Mesothelioma:

- Still experimental—not FDA-approved yet
- Available only in clinical trials
- Early results show promise when combined with checkpoint inhibitors
- Memorial Sloan Kettering and other major centers are conducting trials

From Published Trial Results:

- Some patients have experienced tumor shrinkage and prolonged disease control
- Survival rates in early trials are encouraging (83% one-year survival in one small study)
- Still working to improve effectiveness and reduce side effects

Potential Side Effects

- Cytokine release syndrome (immune system overreaction causing fever, low blood pressure)
- Fatigue
- Chest inflammation
- Risk of infection

We cover CAR T-cell therapy in more detail in Chapter 36.

Other experimental approaches being studied:

- Oncolytic viruses (viruses modified to infect and kill cancer cells)
- Gene editing technologies
- Vaccines designed to stimulate immune response to mesothelioma

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Should my tumor be tested for any specific genetic markers or mutations?
- Are there targeted therapies that might work for my specific cancer?
- Am I eligible for any clinical trials testing new targeted or gene therapies?
- What are the pros and cons of trying a clinical trial versus standard treatment?

CHAPTER 16

Treatment for Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

Through our legal practice, we represent many clients with asbestos-related lung cancer. It's important to understand how this differs from mesothelioma.

How It Differs from Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma affects the lining (pleura) around the lungs

Lung cancer starts inside the lung tissue itself

Both can be caused by asbestos exposure

Risk of lung cancer is dramatically higher in people who smoked AND were exposed to asbestos

Treatment approaches differ significantly

> *Legal note: Some companies and their insurance carriers try to argue that lung cancer was caused solely by smoking and not by asbestos exposure. However, medical experts can often demonstrate when asbestos exposure contributed to or caused the lung cancer, even in smokers.*

Treatment Options for Asbestos-Related Lung Cancer

From medical literature:

Surgery

- Lobectomy – Removing the lobe of the lung containing the tumor (most common)
- Pneumonectomy – Removing an entire lung (less common, for larger tumors)
- Wedge resection – Removing a small piece of lung with the tumor
- Only possible if cancer hasn't spread widely and patients are healthy enough

Chemotherapy

- Often used before surgery (to shrink tumors) or after surgery (to kill remaining cells)
- Platinum-based drugs (cisplatin or carboplatin) are standard
- Combined with other drugs like paclitaxel, pemetrexed, or gemcitabine
- May be the main treatment if surgery isn't possible

Radiation Therapy

- Plays a larger role in lung cancer than mesothelioma
- Often combined with chemotherapy (chemoradiation)
- May be used before or after surgery
- Can be the main treatment for people who can't have surgery
- Effective for controlling symptoms

Immunotherapy

- Has revolutionized lung cancer treatment
- Drugs like pembrolizumab, nivolumab, and atezolizumab are now standard

May be used alone or with chemotherapy

Testing tumor for PD-L1 expression helps guide treatment

Some patients live for years on immunotherapy

Targeted Therapy

Only works if tumor has specific genetic mutations

Tumor testing is essential

Includes drugs for EGFR, ALK, ROS1, and other mutations

Usually, oral pills are taken daily

Can be highly effective when the right mutation is present

Lung cancer treatment depends heavily on the stage:

- Early stage (I-II): Surgery is often the primary treatment, possibly with chemotherapy before or after
- Locally advanced (III): Often chemoradiation, sometimes surgery
- Advanced/metastatic (IV): Systemic treatments like immunotherapy, targeted therapy, or chemotherapy

Questions to ask your doctor:

- Do I have lung cancer, mesothelioma, or both? (Sometimes both occur together)
- What stage is my lung cancer?
- Should my tumor be tested for genetic mutations?
- Am I a candidate for surgery?
- What's the recommended treatment sequence for my situation?
- How does my asbestos exposure history affect my prognosis and treatment options?

CHAPTER 17

Supportive and Palliative Care

Important clarification: Many people think “palliative care” means “giving up” or “hospice only.” This is not true. From medical literature and our clients’ experiences, palliative care can and should start at diagnosis, alongside active cancer treatment.

What Palliative Care Is

Palliative Care Focuses On:

Relieving symptoms

Managing pain

Improving quality of life

Supporting emotional and spiritual well-being

Helping patients and families make informed decisions

Can Be Provided

At any stage of illness

Alongside curative or life-extending treatment

By a team including doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and others

Examples of Palliative Treatments

From medical literature and our clients’ experiences:

For Breathing Problems

- Draining fluid from lungs or abdomen (thoracentesis, paracentesis)
- PleurX catheter for ongoing fluid management at home
- Oxygen therapy
- Medications to ease breathing
- Breathing techniques and positioning
- Fans to create air movement (surprisingly helpful)

For Pain

- Medications (starting with mild pain relievers, progressing to opioids if needed)
- Nerve blocks (injections that numb specific areas)
- Radiation to shrink painful tumors
- Palliative surgery to reduce tumor pressure
- Alternative approaches like acupuncture or massage (with doctor approval)

For Nutrition and Weight Loss:

- Meeting with nutritionists
- High-protein, high-calorie foods and supplements
- Medications to stimulate appetite
- Small, frequent meals instead of three large meals
- Treating nausea that interferes with eating

For Fatigue

- Energy conservation techniques
- Physical therapy to maintain strength

- Treating underlying causes (anemia, depression, poor sleep)
- Balancing activity with rest

For Emotional and Spiritual Support

- Counseling or therapy
- Support groups for patients and families
- Chaplain services
- Connecting with faith communities
- Legacy work (life reviews, recording stories for family)

For Practical Needs

- Social workers helping with financial concerns, transportation, housing
- Caregiver support and training
- Advance care planning discussions
- Coordinating care between multiple providers

When to Consider Hospice Care

Hospice is appropriate when:

- The goal of care shifts fully to comfort
- Life expectancy is estimated at 6 months or less
- The patient chooses to focus on quality of life rather than life-extending treatment

Hospice provides:

- Expert symptom management
- 24/7 access to nursing support

Medications and equipment related to terminal illness

Emotional and spiritual support for patients and family

Respite care to give family caregivers breaks

Bereavement support for family after death

Can be provided:

At home (most common)

In hospice facilities

In nursing homes

In hospitals

> *Important: Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance cover hospice care. Veterans may receive hospice through VA benefits.*

Questions to ask your healthcare team:

- Can I see a palliative care specialist even while pursuing active treatment?
- What can be done to relieve my specific symptoms?
- Are there medications or procedures that would improve my daily comfort?
- What support services are available for my family and caregivers?
- How will we know when it's time to consider hospice care?
- What advance care planning should I do now, while I'm able?

PART III

Legal Rights and the Asbestos Lawsuit Process

Now we're on our home turf. The information in this section comes from our 40+ years of experience as attorneys representing mesothelioma and asbestos-related disease victims. This is what we do professionally, and we can speak with authority here in a way we cannot about medical treatment.

CHAPTER 18

Why Legal Action Matters

Mesothelioma and asbestos-related lung cancer are unique because they are preventable diseases. Companies knew about the dangers of asbestos for decades—in many cases since the 1930s—but failed to protect workers and consumers or warn them of the risks.

From our experience in thousands of cases, taking legal action can provide vital financial compensation for individuals and families affected by mesothelioma. This compensation may cover a wide range of losses, including medical expenses—past, present, and future—as well as lost income and job-related benefits. Clients may also receive compensation for pain and suffering, loss of quality of life, and disability. In cases involving spouses, damages for loss of consortium may also apply. For families pursuing wrongful death claims, compensation can help cover funeral costs and the emotional and financial impact of their loss.

Taking legal action serves a greater purpose beyond financial compensation—it holds companies accountable for their negligence. Many corporations put profits ahead of worker safety, and some even concealed the known dangers of asbestos. Legal claims bring these actions to light, and jury verdicts send a strong message that such behavior will not be tolerated.

For families, seeking justice can also bring a sense of closure. It offers acknowledgment that what happened wasn’t your fault, validates the harm that was done, and provides resources to help support your family's future.

Legal action can also help prevent future harm. Lawsuits raise public awareness, push companies to improve safety standards, and often lead to stronger regulations. In this way, your case may not only bring accountability but also help protect others from similar harm.

The Bottom Line

You didn’t cause your disease. Companies that exposed you to asbestos without proper protection or warnings bear responsibility. You have legal rights and pursuing them doesn’t mean you’re greedy or litigious, it means you’re standing up for justice.

CHAPTER 19

Types of Legal Claims

Based on our practice, families may have multiple legal pathways to compensation. Each serves a different purpose, and you may be able to pursue more than one.

Personal Injury Lawsuits

- Who Files: The person diagnosed with mesothelioma or asbestos-related disease (while living).

What It Seeks Compensation For:

Medical expenses

Lost wages and benefits

Pain and suffering

Loss of enjoyment of life

Disability

Future damages

- Where Are These Lawsuits Filed: The State where the exposure occurred or where you currently live.

Timeline: Subject to Statue of Limitations

Wrongful Death Lawsuits

- Who Files: Surviving family members (spouse, children, sometimes other relatives depending on state law).
- When Filed: After the patient has passed away.

What the Lawsuits Seek Compensation For:

- Loss of financial support
- Loss of companionship and consortium
- Funeral and burial expenses
- The patient's pain and suffering before death
- Loss of guidance and nurturing (especially when children survive)
- Relationship to personal injury claims: If a personal injury lawsuit was already filed, it typically converts to or continues as a wrongful death claim or in some states the rights of the deceased individual is called a survival claim. If no lawsuit was filed before death, a wrongful death suit can still be brought within the wrongful death statute of limitations in many but not all states. Thus, it is imperative that you speak with a lawyer as soon as possible to see how the statute of limitations affects your case.

Asbestos Trust Fund Claims

- What they are: Due to the volume of asbestos lawsuits, many companies that manufactured or used asbestos filed for bankruptcy protection, some legitimate and some not. As part of bankruptcy proceedings, courts required these companies to establish trust funds to compensate current and future victims.

How they work:

Over 60 asbestos bankruptcy trusts exist, holding over $30 billion

Each trust has its own criteria and payment schedules

Claims are often resolved more quickly than lawsuits

Payment amounts vary widely depending on the trust, exposure evidence, and disease severity

You can file claims with multiple trusts if you are exposed to products from multiple companies

Key advantages:

Faster than litigation in many cases

No need to prove company negligence to the same degree

Can be pursued simultaneously with lawsuits against solvent companies

Doesn't require going to trial

Workers' Compensation Claims

- When applicable: If asbestos exposure occurred during the course of employment in a state with workers' compensation coverage

What it provides:

- Medical treatment costs
- Partial wage replacement during disability
- Permanent disability benefits
- Sometimes death benefits for families

Important limitations:

Typically, you can't sue your own employer (workers' comp is usually your exclusive remedy against the employer). There are exceptions for states like Pennsylvania.

Can still sue third parties (product manufacturers, premises owners, etc.)

Benefits are usually less than what lawsuits might recover.

Each state has its own rules and timeframes.

Our approach: We are not workers compensation lawyers, but we work with experienced workers compensation lawyers who help clients file workers' compensation claims while also pursuing full compensation through lawsuits and trust claims against other responsible parties.

- Veterans' Claims – VA Benefits

For veterans exposed to asbestos during military service:

VA Disability Compensation:

Monthly payments for service-connected asbestos disease

Amount depends on disability rating (percentage)

Can include additional amounts for dependents

Surviving spouses may receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

VA Healthcare:

Treatment at VA medical facilities

Some VA centers specialize in mesothelioma (VA Boston partners with Brigham and Women's Hospital)

May include experimental treatments or clinical trials

Important: Veterans can pursue VA benefits AND file lawsuits against asbestos product manufacturers. VA benefits don't prevent you from seeking legal compensation from the companies whose products caused your disease. We work with lawyers outside our firm who will help you if you are eligible.

Social Security Disability

- May be available for: People unable to work due to mesothelioma or related conditions

Two programs:

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) – based on work history

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – need-based

Mesothelioma Benefits:

Listed in Social Security's Compassionate Allowances program

Means faster approval process

Can start from diagnosis date

Does not prevent pursuing other legal claims

Questions for your attorney:

Which types of claims apply to my situation?

Can I pursue multiple types of compensation at once?

What are the time limits for each type of claim?

How do different claims interact with each other?

Will receiving one type of compensation affect others?

CHAPTER 20

The Lawsuit Process Step by Step

From our 40+ years handling these cases, here's what to expect:

Step 1: Initial Consultation

What happens:

Meet with an attorney specializing in asbestos cases (usually free)

Discuss your diagnosis, work history, and how exposure occurred

Attorney explains legal options, process, and likelihood of success

You decide whether to move forward

What to bring:

Medical records and pathology reports

Employment history (dates, employers, job duties)

List of places you worked or lived

Any documentation of asbestos exposure

Military service records (if applicable)

- No cost to you: Most asbestos attorneys (including our firm) offer free consultations and work on contingency—meaning you pay nothing unless we recover compensation.

Step 2: Investigation

What your legal team does:

Gather medical evidence:

Obtain complete medical records

Review pathology reports confirming diagnosis

Arrange medical expert review linking disease to asbestos

Document treatment and prognosis

Investigate exposure:

Interview you about your work history in detail

Identify specific job sites, employers, and time periods

Determine which asbestos-containing products you worked with

Research company records, union records, military records

Interview co-workers or supervisors when possible

Review historical documents (safety data sheets, product catalogs, corporate memos)

Identify defendants:

Companies that manufactured asbestos products you used

Premises owners where you were exposed

Companies that supplied equipment or materials

Any entities legally responsible for your exposure

- Timeline: This typically takes several weeks to a few months.

Step 3: Filing the Complaint

What happens:

Your attorney prepares a legal complaint

Filed in the appropriate court (jurisdiction matters—usually where exposure occurred or where you live)

Names defendants (companies being sued)

States the legal claims (negligence, strict liability, failure to warn, etc.)

Specifies damages sought

Court will serve the complaint on defendants

They have a set time to respond (usually 30-90 days depending on jurisdiction)

Step 4: Discovery Phase

- What discovery means: Both sides exchange information and evidence

Tools used:

Interrogatories:

- Written questions each side must answer under oath
- About work history, medical condition, damages, etc.

Document production:

- Requests for documents
- Medical records, employment records, financial documents
- Defendants must produce company documents about their asbestos products

Depositions:

- Sworn testimony recorded by a court reporter
- Your deposition: You'll be asked about your work history and how exposure occurred (usually several hours)
- Expert depositions: Medical experts and industrial hygiene experts testify
- Defendant depositions: Company representatives answer questions
- Witness depositions: Co-workers or others with relevant knowledge

What to expect at your deposition:

- Your attorney will be with you every step of the way including preparing you extensively so that you are ready to answer questions and not be nervous.
- Defendants' attorneys will ask questions
- Usually held in a conference room, not court
- Can take breaks if needed
- Testimony is under oath but less formal than trial
- In mesothelioma cases, courts often allow video depositions so you don't have to travel

Medical examinations:

- Defendants may request an independent medical exam (IME)
- You may be evaluated by a doctor hired by the defense
- Your attorney will be notified and can arrange for someone to attend
- Timeline: Discovery can take 6-24 months, though mesothelioma cases often move faster because courts give them priority.

Step 5: Settlement Negotiations

What happens:

Throughout the case, and especially after discovery, settlement discussions occur:

Mediation:

A neutral mediator helps both sides try to reach agreement (In some jurisdictions)

Usually a retired judge or experienced attorney

Both sides present their case to the mediator

Mediator shuttles between parties proposing solutions

Non-binding (either side can refuse and proceed to trial)

Direct negotiations:

- Attorneys for both sides discuss settlement terms
- Many times the Court gets directly involved in settlement discussions
- May involve multiple rounds of offers and counteroffers
- Considers strength of evidence, defendant's liability, damages amount

Why cases settle:

- Uncertainty of outcome (trial outcomes are unpredictable)
- Faster resolution
- Less stress for family
- Defendants avoid risk of large jury verdict
- Saves time and expense of trial

Why cases go to trial:

- Settlement offers too low
- Defendants refuse fair compensation
- Plaintiff wants jury verdict for accountability
- Cannot reach agreement on amount

> *Our approach: We prepare every case for trial while pursuing the best possible settlement. We never recommend accepting inadequate settlement offers just to close the case quickly.*

Step 6: Trial (if needed)

What happens if no settlement is reached:

Pre-trial:

Motions and legal arguments before the judge

Final witness lists and exhibit lists

Jury questionnaires and selection process

Jury Selection

Potential jurors questioned (voir dire)

Attorneys can exclude some jurors

Final jury selected (typically 6-12 people plus alternates)

Trial Phases:

Opening statements:

Each side previews their case

Plaintiff's Case:

We present evidence proving exposure and causation

Your testimony (often by video if health doesn't permit court appearance)

Medical expert testimony

Industrial hygiene expert testimony

Co-worker testimony

Documentary evidence

Defense Case:

Defendants present their evidence and witnesses

May challenge causation or liability

May present alternative explanations

Closing arguments

Each attorney summarizes the evidence

Explains why jury should rule in their favor

Jury deliberation and verdict:

Jury discusses the evidence in private

Reaches verdict on liability and damages

Verdict announced in court

- Timeline: Trials can last from several days to several weeks, depending on the number of defendants and complexity of issues.

Step 7: Compensation Awarded

If settlement:

Settlement agreement signed

Payment usually within 30-60 days

May be structured payment or lump sum

Attorney fees and costs deducted per agreement

Net proceeds paid to client or estate

Insurance companies and Medicare may be entitled to be paid back for expenses they paid.

If verdict:

Court enters judgment

Defendants may appeal (can delay payment)

If no appeal or appeal fails, payment follows

Attorney fees and costs deducted per agreement

Tax considerations:

Compensation for personal injury or death is generally not taxable under federal law

Consult tax professional for your specific situation

CHAPTER 21

Evidence Needed for a Strong Case

From our experience, successful cases require proving two things: (1) You have mesothelioma or asbestos-related disease, and (2) Asbestos exposure from defendants' products caused it.

Medical Evidence

Definitive diagnosis:

Pathology report confirming mesothelioma or lung cancer

Medical records documenting symptoms, testing, and treatment

Imaging studies (X-rays, CT scans, PET scans)

Causation evidence:

Medical expert testimony that asbestos exposure caused your disease

Expert analysis of latency period (time between exposure and disease)

Expert opinion on dose-response relationship (level and duration of exposure)

For lung cancer: expert testimony distinguishing asbestos causation from other factors

Documentation of damages:

Medical bills and expenses

Records of treatment and hospitalizations

Life expectancy analysis

Documentation of pain, suffering, and diminished quality of life

Exposure Evidence

Work history:

Detailed timeline of all employment

Job duties and responsibilities

Specific tasks involving asbestos

Names of co-workers who can corroborate

Union membership records

Pay stubs, tax returns, W-2 forms, resumes

Product identification:

Which asbestos products you used or were around

Brand names and manufacturers when known

Type of asbestos materials (pipe insulation, floor tiles, brake parts, etc.)

Frequency and duration of exposure

How exposure occurred (cutting, sanding, sweeping, proximity to others)

Supporting documentation:

Military service records (discharge papers, ship assignments, ratings)

Union apprenticeship records

Company records (employment files, safety records, training materials)

Historical documents showing asbestos in defendants' products

Industry publications and safety data sheets

Corporate memos and internal documents

Witness statements:

Co-workers who witnessed your exposure

Supervisors who assigned work involving asbestos

Family members for take-home exposure cases

Expert witnesses (industrial hygienists, medical experts)

Site-specific evidence:

Photographs of work sites

Building records showing asbestos-containing materials

Navy ship histories (for veterans)

Insurance maps and facility records

Impact Evidence

Economic damages:

Lost wages and benefits

Future earning capacity

Medical expenses (past and projected)

Cost of household services you can no longer perform

Travel expenses for medical treatment

Non-economic damages:

Pain and suffering (physical and mental)

Loss of enjoyment of life

Disability and impairment

Fear, anxiety, and emotional distress

Loss of consortium (spouse’s loss of companionship, intimacy, support)

How we build this evidence:

Our process includes detailed interviews with you and your family members, along with a thorough investigation by experienced professionals who know where to find critical evidence. We have access to extensive databases of asbestos products, company records, and ship histories, as well as a trusted network of expert witnesses we've collaborated with for decades. We also work with other lawyers nationwide who represent individuals injured by asbestos exposure. In addition, we handle document retrieval from employers, the military, unions, and government agencies, and use co-worker location services to find people who worked alongside you.

What if you don't remember everything?

This is common—exposure often occurred decades ago.

We help by:

Asking detailed questions that jog memory

Showing photographs and product catalogs

Researching typical practices in your industry and time period

Finding co-workers who may remember

Reviewing historical records of job sites

Using industrial hygiene experts to reconstruct likely exposures

CHAPTER 22

How Long Does a Lawsuit Take & Time Limits for Filing

Timeline for Case Resolution

From our experience, timelines vary significantly:

Expedited handling:

Mesothelioma cases are often given priority by courts because of the serious nature of the illness

Judges understand the urgency and move cases faster

Some courts have special asbestos dockets

Typical timeframes:

Settlement before trial: 12-24 months on average

Some resolve faster (6-9 months)

Complex cases with many defendants may take longer

-Court resources are also a major factor

Depends on how quickly evidence is gathered and discovery proceeds

Cases that go to trial:

18-36 months from filing to verdict

Preparing for trial takes time

Court schedules and availability affect timing

Multiple defendants may cause delays

Trust fund claims:

Can resolve in 6-12 months

Often faster than litigation

Depends on completeness of documentation

Some trusts move faster than others

Factors affecting timing:

Number of defendants

Complexity of exposure history

Court jurisdiction and caseload

Whether defendants cooperate or create delays

Health of plaintiff (courts expedite cases when health is declining)

Settlement negotiations progress

What we do to expedite:

File cases promptly once hired

Gather evidence efficiently

Request expedited schedules from court

Push defendants to respond quickly

Pursue settlement actively while preparing for trial

Use video depositions to avoid delays

- Statute of Limitations – Time Limits for Filing

  This is critical: Every state has deadlines for filing lawsuits. Miss the deadline, and you may lose your right to compensation. Every case is different and it is urgent that you discuss your circumstances with your lawyer ASAP.

General rules:

Personal injury claims:

Most states: 2 years from diagnosis

Some states: 1 year (Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee)

Some states: 3 years (Connecticut, Maine, Ohio, Rhode Island)

Minnesota: 6 years (longest)

Wrongful death claims:

Most states: 2 years from date of death

Some states: 1 year from death

Some states: 3 years from death

Important exceptions and complications:

Discovery rule:

In many states, the clock doesn't start until you "discover" or should have discovered the disease and its connection to asbestos

Courts interpret this differently

Usually means date of diagnosis, not date of exposure

Different rules for different defendants:

Claims against private companies may have different deadlines than claims against government entities

Military contractors sometimes have special protections

Trust fund claims:

Many trusts don't have strict time limits. Limits vary based upon the particular asbestos trust fund.

But filing delays can affect your ability to file lawsuits

Workers' compensation:

Often has much shorter deadlines (weeks or months in some states)

Rules vary significantly by state

Why you shouldn't delay:

From our experience:

Evidence becomes harder to find over time

Documents get destroyed

Witnesses' memories fade

Co-workers become harder to locate or may pass away

Health can decline quickly with mesothelioma

You want compensation while you can benefit from it

May become too ill to participate in your case

Missing the deadline means losing your rights

Courts strictly enforce statutes of limitations

Very few exceptions once deadline passes

Peace of mind

Getting the legal process started reduces stress

Focuses your energy on treatment and family

Our recommendation:

Contact an attorney as soon as possible after diagnosis.

Initial consultation is free

We can tell you exactly what time limits apply to your situation

We'll start investigating immediately

No obligation to hire us after consultation

Don't wait because:

“I want to focus on treatment first” – We work around your medical schedule

“I don’t have all my employment records” – We can help find them

“I’m not sure I was exposed to asbestos” – We can investigate

“I don’t want to be a burden” – You’re not; this is your right

CHAPTER 23

Legal Fees Explained

Money concerns often stop people from seeking legal help. Let us be clear about how we—and most reputable asbestos attorneys—handle fees.

Contingency Fee Basis

What it means:

No upfront cost to you—we don't charge anything to start your case

We only get paid if we win—if we don't recover compensation, you owe us nothing for attorney fees

Our fee is a percentage of what we recover—typically 33-40% depending on state law and whether the case settles or goes to trial

We advance litigation costs—we pay costs like court filing fees, expert witnesses, depositions, and document retrieval

If we don't win anything, you owe: $0 for attorney fees

Why this arrangement helps families:

Access to justice regardless of financial resources

You can hire experienced attorneys even if you have no money

No need to pay thousands of dollars upfront

No hourly billing

Aligns our interests with yours

We're motivated to maximize your recovery because it affects ours

We invest heavily in your case because we believe in it

We fight as hard as possible because we only get paid if you win

No risk to you

If the case doesn’t succeed, you don’t owe us attorney fees

We bear the financial risk of litigation

What are “costs” vs. “fees”?

Attorney fees:

Payment for our legal work and expertise

Calculated as percentage of recovery

Only owed if we win

Litigation costs:

Out-of-pocket expenses advancing your case

Examples:

Court filing fees

Expert witness fees (medical experts, industrial hygienists)

Deposition costs (court reporters, transcripts)

Medical record retrieval

Document copying and production

Travel expenses for depositions or trial

Investigative costs

Process servers

How costs are handled:

Most firms (including ours) advance these costs—meaning we pay them upfront

Costs are reimbursed from your recovery when the case settles or wins at trial

If we don’t win, policies vary by firm—some firms absorb the costs, others may seek reimbursement (our firm absorbs costs in mesothelioma cases because we don’t want financial concerns preventing people from seeking justice)

Percentage varies:

33-40% is typical for asbestos cases (This depends on the state)

May be lower if a minor is involved

Percentages are regulated by state law in many jurisdictions

Discussed and agreed upon before you hire us

Questions to ask any attorney:

- What is your contingency fee percentage?
- Does it change if the case goes to trial?
- How are litigation costs handled?
- What happens to costs if we don’t win?
- Do you charge separately for trust fund claims?
- Are there any circumstances where I’d owe you money even if we don’t win?
- Can I see a written fee agreement before I commit?
- Our practice:
- We provide written fee agreements
- Everything is explained clearly before you hire us
- No hidden fees or surprise charges
- You’re not committed until you sign the agreement
- You can ask questions at any time
- The bottom line: Cost should never prevent you from seeking legal advice. The consultation is free, and if we take your case, you pay nothing unless we win.

CHAPTER 24

Potential Compensation

"How much is my case worth?" This is an understandable question, but there's no simple answer. Every case is unique. From our 40+ years of experience, here's what affects compensation and what you might expect. If any lawyer tells you up front what you will get be suspicious. It does not work that way.

Types of Compensation

Economic damages (calculable financial losses):

Medical expenses:

Past medical bills

Future medical treatment costs

Medications and medical equipment

Home healthcare and nursing care

Travel expenses for treatment

Clinical trial costs not covered by insurance

Lost income:

Wages lost due to illness

Benefits lost (health insurance, retirement contributions)

Future earning capacity if you can no longer work

Loss of business or self-employment income

Reduced work capacity (if working part-time instead of full-time)

Non-economic damages (quality of life losses):

Pain and suffering:

Physical pain from the disease

Side effects of treatment

Mental anguish and emotional distress

Fear and anxiety

Loss of enjoyment of life

Disability and disfigurement

Loss of consortium:

Spouse’s loss of companionship, intimacy, and support

Children’s loss of parental guidance and nurturing

Family’s loss of the relationship

In wrongful death cases:

Funeral and burial expenses

Loss of financial support to family

Loss of inheritance (what the person would have left to family)

Loss of companionship and guidance

Factors Affecting Compensation Amount

From our experience, these factors significantly impact case value:

Severity of illness:

Mesothelioma typically results in higher compensation than pleural plaques

Shorter life expectancy usually means higher awards

Stage of disease at diagnosis matters

Age and life circumstances:

Younger victims with longer life expectancy often receive more

Supporting dependents (spouse, minor children) increases damages

Career stage affects lost income calculations

Strength of exposure evidence:

Clear evidence of specific products and companies

Multiple sources of exposure may mean multiple defendants

Duration and intensity of exposure

Documents and witnesses supporting your exposure history

Jurisdiction:

State and local court where case is filed matters

Some jurisdictions have higher average verdicts

Some have caps on damages

Some are more favorable to plaintiffs

Number of defendants:

Cases with multiple responsible companies may recover more

Some defendants may have greater liability than others

Bankruptcy trust funds vs. solvent companies

Comparative fault:

If you smoked and have lung cancer, defendants may argue smoking contributed

Your percentage of fault (if any) can reduce damages in some states

Quality of legal representation:

Experienced attorneys typically recover more

Resources to fully develop the case matter

Reputation and track record affect settlement negotiations

Examples of Outcomes

Important disclaimer: These are general ranges based on public information. Your case may be higher or lower depending on specific facts. These are NOT guarantees.

Important notes on publicized verdicts:

Defendants often appeal, which can delay and reduce actual payment

Some large verdicts are reduced on appeal or in post-trial motions

Settlement may occur after verdict but before appeal

Going to trial involves risk—you might win more or less than settlement offer

Many are reversed on appeal

Variables that make prediction difficult:

Juries are unpredictable

Judges may make rulings that affect case value

New evidence may emerge during discovery

Defendants' financial situation affects their settlement position

Changes in law or regulations can impact cases

How we approach valuation:

Thorough case evaluation based on all factors

Research comparable cases in similar jurisdictions

Consult with experts on economic and medical damages

Develop maximum case value for negotiation purposes

Provide realistic range to clients, not false promises

Pursue maximum compensation while advising on settlement vs. trial risks

What we tell clients:

We don't promise specific amounts

We fight for every dollar you deserve

We provide honest assessment of case strengths and weaknesses

We give you information needed to make informed decisions about settlement vs. trial

Your decision—we advise, you decide

The most important thing: Compensation can’t restore your health or bring back a loved one. But it can:

Provide financial security for your family

Pay for the best possible medical care

Allow you to focus on quality time rather than financial stress

Hold companies accountable

Deliver justice

CHAPTER 25

Questions to Ask Your Lawyer

When you're choosing an attorney to handle your mesothelioma or asbestos case, ask these questions. From our experience, the answers will help you evaluate whether the lawyer is right for you.

About Experience and Expertise

Do you specialize in asbestos and mesothelioma cases?

Look for: Attorneys who focus primarily on asbestos litigation

Avoid: General personal injury lawyers who occasionally handle asbestos cases

How many mesothelioma cases have you handled?

Numbers matter

Recent experience is relevant

Have you handled cases in the jurisdiction where mine will be filed?

Local court knowledge matters

Familiarity with judges and procedures

Who will actually work on my case day-to-day?

Will it be the attorney you're meeting or junior associates?

What is the experience level of the team?

About Case Strategy

How will you investigate my asbestos exposure?

What resources and databases do you use?

Do you have investigators who specialize in this?

Will my case be filed individually or as part of a group of cases?

Individual attention vs. mass processing

Implications for settlement strategy

What is your strategy for maximizing my compensation?

Trust funds, litigation, or both?

How do you identify all responsible parties?

Do you typically recommend settlement or trial?

Neither answer is automatically right or wrong

You want a lawyer who can do both and advises based on your specific case

About Timeline and Process

How long will my case likely take?

Realistic timeframe

Factors that could speed up or delay

What will I need to do during the case?

Your role and responsibilities

How much time commitment required

How do you handle cases where health is declining?

Expedited processes

Video depositions

Minimizing burden on sick clients

About Fees and Costs

What is your contingency fee percentage?

Standard rate

Does it change if case goes to trial?

How are litigation costs handled?

Who pays upfront?

What if we don’t win?

Are there any situations where I might owe you money?

Should be “no” in most reputable asbestos practices

Get clarification in writing

How do you charge for trust fund claims?

Same percentage as litigation?

Separate fee structure?

About Communication and Support

How often will you update me on case progress?

Regular intervals

Will you respond to my calls and emails?

Who will I communicate with most often?

The attorney directly?

Paralegals or case managers?

Do they explain things clearly?

About Your Firm

How long has your firm been handling asbestos cases?

Longevity indicates stability and experience

Firms with decades of experience have seen it all

What resources does your firm have?

Medical experts

Industrial hygiene experts

Investigative resources

Financial capacity to fund expensive litigation

Are you familiar with the companies/products that exposed me?

Knowledge of specific industries (shipyards, construction, etc.)

Experience with specific defendants

Do you have relationships with mesothelioma specialists and treatment centers?

Can you help me connect with top medical care?

Network of resources beyond legal help

Red Flags to Watch For

From our experience, be wary if a lawyer:

Guarantees a specific settlement amount

Promises unrealistically fast results

Pressures you to sign immediately

Won’t explain fees clearly

Seems unfamiliar with mesothelioma specifically

Doesn’t have a clear plan for investigating exposure

Won’t provide references or examples of past results

Doesn’t listen to your questions or concerns

What to Look For

The right attorney should:

Listen carefully to your story

Ask detailed questions about your exposure history

Explain the process clearly in terms you understand

Be honest about strengths and potential challenges in your case

Treat you with compassion and respect

Make you feel comfortable and supported

Have a proven track record in asbestos litigation

Provide a written fee agreement you can review

Our Approach

We believe in:

Transparency about our experience and results

Honest assessment of your case from day one

Clear communication throughout the process

Treating you as a person, not just a case number

Fighting for maximum compensation while being realistic about what’s achievable

Providing support beyond just legal work

- Take your time: This is an important decision. Meet with more than one lawyer if you want. The right attorney will earn your trust, not demand it immediately.

CHAPTER 26

Choosing the Right Law Firm

Selecting a legal team is one of the most important decisions you will make. From our 40+ years in this field, here is what matters.

Why Specialization Matters

Asbestos litigation is highly specialized

Requires knowledge of specific products, industries, and companies

Involves complex medical and scientific evidence

Needs understanding of bankruptcy trust systems

Demands familiarity with asbestos-specific legal precedents

A general personal injury lawyer may be excellent at car accidents but lack the specific knowledge needed for asbestos cases.

Key Qualities to Look For

Extensive Experience

Look for firms with:

- Decades of practice specifically in asbestos litigation
- Hundreds or thousands of cases handled successfully
- Proven track record of significant settlements and verdicts
- Recent results—not just history from 20 years ago

Why it matters:

Experience means the firm has:

- Established relationships with expert witnesses
- Knowledge of which defendants are solvent vs. bankrupt
- Familiarity with judges and courts

- Understanding of how insurance companies and defense lawyers operate
- Resources to handle complex cases

Significant Resources

Top asbestos firms have:

Financial resources:

Ability to advance substantial litigation costs (expert witnesses can cost $50,000+)

Capacity to handle cases through trial if needed

Stability to pursue cases for years if necessary

Investigative resources:

Access to product identification databases

Historical document libraries

Industry and ship histories

Networks to locate co-workers and witnesses

Expert witness networks:

Established relationships with leading medical experts

Industrial hygiene experts who can prove exposure

Economic experts for damages calculations

Experts in specific industries (maritime, construction, etc.)

Support staff:

Experienced paralegals who know asbestos litigation

Medical record analysts

Case managers to coordinate complex cases

Support for clients and families

Proven Track Record

Ask about:

Trust fund recoveries:

Experience with bankruptcy trusts

Total amounts recovered from trusts

Number of trusts they regularly file with

Compassion and Client Focus

The best firms treat clients as people, not case files:

Communication:

Return phone calls and emails promptly

Explain things clearly in plain English

Keep you updated on progress

Welcome questions

Respect:

Understand the emotional weight you're carrying

Work around your medical schedule

Minimize burden on you and family

Treat you with dignity

Support:

Help beyond just legal work

Connect you with medical resources

Provide emotional support and understanding

Personal attention:

You are not just a number

Lawyers know your name and case

Individualized strategy for your specific situation

National and Local Presence

National reach matters because:

Many defendants operate nationwide

Trust funds are managed nationally

Best expert witnesses may be located anywhere

Some cases benefit from filing in particular jurisdictions

Local knowledge matters because:

Understanding of state laws where you live or were exposed

Relationships with local courts and judges

Convenience for you (local offices if possible)

Knowledge of local industries and exposure sources

The best firms have both: National experience and resources with local presence and knowledge.

Ethical Reputation

Bar association standing:

No disciplinary actions

In good standing with state bars

Peer recognition:

Ratings from Martindale-Hubbell, Super Lawyers, Best Lawyers

Recognition by legal organizations

Leadership in trial lawyer associations

Client reviews:

What former clients say

Responsiveness and satisfaction

Results achieved

Warning Signs to Avoid

Be cautious of firms that:

Have no specific experience with asbestos cases

Pressure you to sign immediately without time to think

Make guarantees about outcomes

Have poor communication or don't return calls

Seem more interested in volume than your individual case

Can't clearly explain their fee structure

Won't provide references or examples of results

Have had ethical complaints or discipline

Questions to Ask About the Firm:

- How long has your firm handled asbestos cases?
- How many attorneys work on these cases?
- What percentage of your practice is asbestos litigation?
- How many cases are you currently handling?
- What is your average caseload per attorney?
- Do you have offices near me, or will everything be remote?
- Can you provide references from past clients (with their permission)?
- What support will I receive beyond legal representation?

Why Choose Cohen, Placitella & Roth

We've dedicated over 40 years to representing mesothelioma victims and their families. Here's what sets us apart:

Experience:

- 40+ years exclusively in complex litigation including asbestos cases
- Thousands of cases handled
- Hundreds of millions recovered for clients
- Deep knowledge of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and national asbestos litigation

Resources:

- Substantial financial capacity to fund expensive litigation
- Established relationships with nation's leading medical and industrial hygiene experts
- Extensive product identification and historical research libraries
- Dedicated team focused solely on asbestos litigation

Track Record:

- Significant settlements and verdicts throughout our history
- Reputation for thorough preparation and aggressive representation
- Experience with every type of exposure scenario (shipyards, construction, industrial, take-home)
- Success with complex cases other firms might avoid

Compassionate Client Service:

- We treat every client as family
- Personal attention from experienced attorneys
- Work around your medical schedule
- Minimal burden on you—we do the heavy lifting
- Clear communication every step of the way
- Support for families, not just legal claims

Philosophy:

We fight for what's right

We leave no stone unturned

We put people first

We know when to talk and when to listen

Our goal is justice and accountability, not just settlements

Convenience:

Offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania

Serve clients nationwide

Will come to you if you can't travel

Video depositions to minimize burden

No Cost Unless We Win:

Free initial consultation

Contingency fee basis

We advance all costs

No risk to you

The bottom line: This decision is important. We want you to feel confident in your choice. We're happy to answer any questions and provide the information you need to decide. No pressure, just honest advice and committed advocacy if you choose us.

PART IV

Special Topics in Asbestos and Mesothelioma

IV

CHAPTER 27

Talc and Asbestos – The Hidden Connection

Through our legal work, we have represented many people exposed to asbestos through talc. This is an important and often overlooked exposure source.

What Is Talc?

Talc is a soft mineral used in many industries and consumer products

Used in ceramics, plastics, paint, paper, rubber, cosmetics, and more

Talc itself does not cause mesothelioma

The problem: Many talc deposits also contain asbestos

Why Talc Contains Asbestos

From geological evidence:

Talc and asbestos are often found together in the earth

They form in similar geological conditions

Mining talc often means mining asbestos at the same time

Until recent decades, companies did limited or no testing to remove asbestos from talc

Industries and Workers at Risk

From our cases, high-risk exposures include:

Industrial Talc Products:

Ceramic and tile factories – workers handling talc powder for tile and pottery glazes

Rubber manufacturing – talc used as mold release agent and filler

Plastics production – talc as filler in plastic products

Paint and coatings – talc as extender and to prevent settling

Paper mills – talc for paper coating and filling

Joint compound – talc in drywall finishing products

Cosmetic product facilities – workers manufacturing talc-based products

Consumer product exposure:

People who used talcum powder products for decades

Particularly cosmetic talc (baby powder, body powder, feminine hygiene products)

How Exposure Occurred

From our investigation of these cases:

Occupational exposure:

Pouring talc powder from bags (created visible clouds of dust)

Mixing talc into products

Sweeping up spilled talc

Working near talc processing equipment

Inadequate ventilation and no respirators provided

Companies knew or should have known about asbestos contamination

Consumer exposure:

Daily use of talcum powder products

Application to skin (particles became airborne)

Decades of cumulative exposure

Products marketed as safe, especially for babies

No warnings about asbestos risk

Take-home exposure:

Family members of industrial workers

Talc dust brought home on clothing and in hair

Health Impact

From medical evidence in our cases:

Workers and consumers developed mesothelioma decades after exposure

Talc-related mesothelioma is medically indistinguishable from other asbestos-related mesothelioma

Pathology shows asbestos fibers in lung tissue

Medical experts can link disease to talc exposure

Legal Cases and Company Responsibility

From our experience:

Court recognition:

Many courts have found that asbestos-contaminated talc caused disease

Juries have awarded significant verdicts in talc cases

Companies knew or should have known about contamination

Companies failed to test adequately or warn consumers and workers

Defendant companies:

Talc miners and suppliers (Imerys, Cyprus, others)

Product manufacturers who used contaminated talc

Companies that made consumer talc products

Some major companies filed bankruptcy due to talc liabilities (Whittaker, Clark & Daniel's, Imerys)

Evidence shows:

Internal company documents revealing knowledge of asbestos in talc

Inadequate testing or deliberate avoidance of testing

Suppression of information about health risks

Prioritizing profits over safety

Current Status of Talc Products

Many consumer talc products reformulated or discontinued

Regulatory scrutiny increased (FDA testing found asbestos in some products as recently as 2019-2020)

Industrial use of talc continues in some applications

Litigation ongoing nationwide

If You Were Exposed to Talc

Tell your doctor if you:

Worked in industries using talc powder

Handled talc-containing products regularly

Used talcum powder products extensively for decades

Lived with someone who worked with industrial talc

Medical screening:

Discuss appropriate screening (chest X-rays, CT scans)

Monitor for respiratory symptoms

Consider consultation with pulmonologist if you have symptoms

Symptoms to watch for:

Shortness of breath

Persistent cough

Chest pain

Unexplained weight loss

Fatigue

Legal Rights

If you developed mesothelioma or lung cancer after talc exposure:

You may have legal claims against talc suppliers, product manufacturers, or employers

Both industrial and consumer talc exposure can support claims

Time limits apply—consult an attorney promptly

Evidence of talc exposure requires thorough investigation

Product identification

Work history documentation

Expert testimony on asbestos in talc

Medical evidence linking talc to disease

Our Experience with Talc Cases

We've represented:

Ceramic tile workers

Rubber plant workers

Paint and plastics workers

Paper mill workers

Construction workers who used talc-containing joint compound

Consumers who used talcum powder products for decades

We have:

Access to historical records showing asbestos in talc products

Relationships with experts in mineralogy and industrial hygiene

Experience proving talc exposure and causation

Track record of successful results in talc-related cases

Questions to ask your attorney:

- Have you handled talc exposure cases before?
- Can you identify which talc products contained asbestos?
- Do you have experts who can testify about asbestos in talc?
- What evidence do you need from me about my talc exposure?

CHAPTER 28

CAR T-Cell Therapy – A New Frontier

We covered this in our blog post, but families dealing with mesothelioma ask us about it constantly. Here's what you need to know based upon our experience as lawyers, not doctors, from a practical standpoint.

Remember: We are lawyers, not doctors. This information comes from medical literature and expert testimony in our cases. All medical decisions should be made with your oncologist. We actually have clients who seem to have benefited greatly from this experimental therapy, which is why we are giving it special treatment.

What Is CAR T-Cell Therapy?

CAR T stands for Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy—a form of immunotherapy that's already proven effective for some blood cancers and is now being tested for mesothelioma.

How it works (simplified):

Doctors collect your T cells (immune cells) from your blood

In a lab, they genetically engineer these cells to recognize mesothelin (a protein on mesothelioma cells)

The modified cells are multiplied to create millions of CAR T cells

These cells are infused back into your body

The CAR T cells hunt down and attack cancer cells displaying mesothelin

Why It's Promising for Mesothelioma

From medical literature:

Mesothelin is present on 70-100% of mesothelioma tumors

It's mostly absent or low on healthy tissue

Makes it a good target for CAR T cells

Early trials show encouraging results

Current Status: Experimental

Important facts:

Not FDA-approved for mesothelioma (as of 2025)

Available only in clinical trials at specialized centers

Still being refined to improve effectiveness and safety

May become standard treatment in the future, but not yet

Early Trial Results

From published medical studies we've reviewed:

Memorial Sloan Kettering Trial:

Patients received CAR T cells injected directly into chest cavity

Many also received checkpoint inhibitor drugs (pembrolizumab)

Results showed:

96% disease control rate (tumor shrinkage or stability)

Median survival of 23.9 months with combination therapy

83% one-year survival rate

Some patients with prolonged remissions

Other trials:

Various approaches being tested

Combination with checkpoint inhibitors shows promise

“Armored” CAR T cells with built-in resistance to tumor suppression

Results have been mixed but encouraging

How It’s Different from Other Treatments

Advantages:

Uses your own immune cells (personalized medicine)

Cells can persist and continue fighting cancer for months

Non-traditional mechanism—works differently than chemo

May work when other treatments have failed

One-time or limited treatment (not continuous like chemo)

Challenges:

Difficult for CAR T cells to penetrate solid tumors like mesothelioma

Tumor microenvironment can shut down immune cells

Potential for serious side effects

Still experimental—long-term outcomes unknown

Only available in trials at limited centers

Potential Side Effects

From medical literature:

Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS):

Immune system overreaction

Symptoms: fever, low blood pressure, difficulty breathing

Can range from mild to severe

Treatable with medications like tocilizumab

Requires careful monitoring

Other side effects:

Fatigue

Chest inflammation (when cells attack tumor in chest)

Risk of infection (from lymphodepleting chemotherapy given before CAR T cells)

Rare: neurological effects

Who Might Be Eligible

From trial criteria we've seen:

Confirmed mesothelioma diagnosis (usually pleural)

High mesothelin expression in tumor (requires testing)

Adequate overall health (heart, liver, kidney function)

Previous treatment with standard therapy (in some trials)

Willingness to travel to trial center and stay nearby during treatment

Where Trials Are Being Conducted

From ClinicalTrials.gov and our knowledge of treatment centers:

Major centers:

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York)

National Cancer Institute / NIH (Bethesda, MD)

University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)

MD Anderson Cancer Center (Houston)

Other centers may be added as trials expand

What Participation Involves

From trial protocols:

Time commitment:

Initial evaluation and testing (1-2 visits)

T-cell collection procedure (leukapheresis—several hours)

Manufacturing period while cells are engineered (1-3 weeks)

Lymphodepleting chemotherapy (short course)

Hospital stay for CAR T infusion (typically 1-2 weeks)

Extended monitoring near treatment center (2-4 weeks)

Long-term follow-up visits

Costs:

CAR T cells and trial-specific procedures typically provided free by trial sponsor

Standard medical care billed to insurance

Patient may face costs for travel, lodging, lost wages

Financial support:

Some trials help with travel/lodging

Asbestos compensation (trust funds, settlements) can help cover these expenses

Questions to Ask Your Oncologist

- Am I a candidate for CAR T-cell therapy based on my specific situation?
- Should I wait for CAR T trials or pursue other treatments first?
- How do I find appropriate trials?
- Can you refer me to a center conducting CAR T trials?
- What are the realistic risks and benefits for someone like me?
- How does CAR T compare to other experimental treatments available?

Our Perspective as Attorneys

Why this matters legally:

CAR T therapy, if successful, could extend your life—affecting life expectancy calculations in legal claims

Travel and treatment costs may be compensable damages

Time away from work affects lost wage calculations

We've helped clients use settlement proceeds to access experimental treatments

How we can help:

Compensation from legal claims can fund:

Travel to trial centers

Extended stays near treatment facilities

Lost income during treatment

Other medical expenses not covered by trials

We coordinate legal proceedings around treatment schedules

We minimize burden so you can focus on medical care

What we tell clients:

Pursue the best medical care available, including clinical trials if appropriate

Don't let legal matters delay medical decisions

We work around your treatment schedule

Compensation is meant to support your best possible care

The Future of CAR T for Mesothelioma

From medical literature and expert predictions:

Near-term (next 2-5 years):

More trials testing refined approaches

Combinations with other immunotherapies

Better patient selection criteria

Improved management of side effects

Longer-term (5-10 years):

Possible FDA approval if trials succeed

Broader availability beyond research centers

Integration into standard treatment protocols

Potential as first-line or consolidation therapy

What gives us hope:

Scientific progress is rapid

Dedicated researchers at top centers

Increasing funding and attention

Each trial teaches how to improve the next

Some patients experiencing meaningful benefits

> *Bottom line: CAR T-cell therapy is not yet standard treatment, but it represents genuine hope. If you're interested, discuss with your oncologist and explore whether clinical trial participation might be appropriate for you.*

CHAPTER 29

Veterans and Asbestos Exposure

Veterans—especially Navy veterans—are among the largest groups of people affected by mesothelioma. From our 40+ years representing veterans, this is what you need to know.

Why Veterans Were Exposed

From our investigation of military exposure: Ships, bases, and vehicles built before the 1980s were filled with asbestos

Navy ships:

Boiler rooms and engine rooms (extreme heat required fire-resistant insulation)

Pipe insulation throughout ships

Gaskets and packing

Ceiling and floor tiles

Damage control materials

Virtually every ship built before 1980 contained extensive asbestos

Confined spaces magnified exposure:

Small, enclosed compartments

Poor ventilation

Disturbing asbestos during maintenance, repair, and damage control

Sleeping and living in spaces with deteriorating asbestos

All military branches

Army

Barracks and buildings

Vehicles and equipment

Construction and engineering units

Air Force:

Aircraft brake assemblies

Engine components

Base buildings

Marines:

Ships (Marines served aboard Navy vessels)

Base facilities

Vehicle maintenance

Coast Guard:

Ships and cutters

Shore facilities

Specific High-Risk Jobs (Navy)

From our clients' service records:

Boiler tenders and machinist mates – worked directly with pipe insulation in engine and boiler rooms

Hull technicians – cut, installed, and removed asbestos insulation

Damage controlmen – used asbestos in firefighting and repair operations

Pipefitters – installed and maintained pipe insulation

Electricians – worked near asbestos insulation on wiring and equipment

Shipfitters and welders – disturbed asbestos during welding and cutting

Aviation mechanics – brake work on aircraft

All rates and ranks were exposed to some degree – even those not directly working with asbestos lived, ate, and slept in spaces containing it.

Why the Risk Was So High

From historical evidence:

Manufacturers knew asbestos was dangerous

Internal documents show companies knew of health risks since 1930s

Warnings were not provided to military or veterans

Profits prioritized over service member safety

Military initially unaware:

Used asbestos products based on manufacturers' recommendations

Believed products were safe

Didn't warn or protect service members adequately

By 1970s-1980s:

Military began recognizing dangers

Asbestos use phased out

But damage was done—millions already exposed

Health Impact on Veterans

From VA and medical data:

Veterans develop mesothelioma at much higher rates than general population

Navy veterans are highest risk group of all veterans

Disease typically appears 30-50 years after service

Many veterans exposed in 1950s-1970s being diagnosed now

VA Benefits for Veterans

Veterans may be eligible for:

VA Disability Compensation:

What it is:

Monthly payments for service-connected asbestos disease

Amount based on disability rating (percentage)

Eligibility:

Service connection to exposure during military service

Current diagnosis of asbestos-related disease

Medical evidence linking disease to service

Amounts (as of 2025):

100% disability rating: approximately $3,700+ per month

Additional amounts for dependents

Adjusts annually

How to apply:

File VA claim (Form 21-526EZ)

Provide service records, medical records, and exposure evidence

VA schedules compensation and pension exam

Decision made on service connection and rating

VA Healthcare:

What it provides:

Treatment at VA hospitals and clinics

Access to specialists

Medications and equipment

Some VA centers have mesothelioma expertise

VA Boston Healthcare System:

Partnerships with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital

Specialized mesothelioma program

Access to clinical trials

Expert thoracic oncologists

For surviving spouses:

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC):

Monthly payments to surviving spouse

Currently approximately $1,600+ per month

May include additional amounts for dependent children

Eligibility based on veteran's service-connected death

Important: Veterans Can Pursue Both VA Benefits AND Legal Claims

This is crucial to understand:

VA benefits:

Compensation from Department of Veterans Affairs

Based on service connection

No effect on legal claims

Legal claims:

Against manufacturers of asbestos products

Separate from VA benefits (we will help you find a lawyer for this)

Can pursue simultaneously

Often result in larger compensation

Why both are important:

VA benefits provide monthly support and healthcare

Legal claims provide lump-sum compensation for full damages

VA benefits arrive relatively quickly (months)

Legal claims take longer but potentially more substantial (can be millions)

Receiving VA benefits does NOT reduce legal recovery (in most cases)

Legal settlements/verdicts do NOT reduce VA benefits

How We Help Veterans

From our experience:

VA claim support: (we don't practice in this area but will help you find competent counsel)

Help gather service records and exposure evidence

Connect you with VA representatives

Provide documentation to support VA claim

Coordinate with VSOs (Veterans Service Organizations)

Legal representation:

Identify which asbestos products you were exposed to

File lawsuits against manufacturers (NOT against U.S. government or military)

Pursue maximum compensation for your injuries

Work around VA appointments and healthcare needs

Exposure investigation:

We have extensive databases of ships, bases, and equipment

Navy ship histories documenting asbestos use

Technical manuals showing asbestos products

Witness networks of fellow veterans

Resources for Veterans

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs):

American Legion

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Can help file VA claims at no cost

VA facilities specializing in mesothelioma:

VA Boston Healthcare System (partnerships with Dana-Farber and Brigham)

Other VA hospitals with thoracic oncology programs

Online resources:

VA website: [www.va.gov] (http://www.va.gov)

Veterans Benefits Administration

VA claims status tracking

Our Commitment to Veterans

From our firm’s perspective:

Representing veterans is an honor and responsibility

Military service members deserve protection from companies that exposed them

We have deep experience with military exposure cases

We coordinate VA benefits and legal claims with experienced counsel we will help you find

We never charge veterans for consultations

We work on contingency fee basis like all our cases

The bottom line: If you're a veteran with mesothelioma or asbestos-related disease, you have both VA benefits and legal rights. Pursue both. You served your country; companies that endangered you should be held accountable, and the VA should provide the benefits you've earned.

CHAPTER 30

Coping With the Emotional Burden

From our 40+ years working with mesothelioma families, we know the emotional toll is as real as the physical illness.

The Emotional Impact

What families commonly experience:

For patients:

Shock and disbelief at diagnosis

Anger at companies that caused exposure

Fear of death and suffering

Grief over lost future plans

Anxiety about family's future

Depression from illness and limitations

Guilt about burdening loved ones

Loss of identity and independence

For family members:

Helplessness watching loved one suffer

Exhaustion from caregiving demands

Financial stress from lost income and medical bills

Anticipatory grief before death occurs

Strained relationships due to stress

Isolation from friends who don't understand

Difficulty balancing caregiving with other responsibilities

For children and grandchildren:

Confusion about what's happening

Fear of losing parent or grandparent

Disruption of normal family life

Taking on adult responsibilities too early

All of These Feelings Are Normal

From mental health professionals and our experience with families:

There is no "right way" to feel

Emotions may change day to day

You may feel multiple conflicting emotions simultaneously

What you're feeling is understandable given the circumstances

Seeking help is strength, not weakness

Strategies for Coping

Support Groups

Why they help:

Connect with others who truly understand

Share practical advice and coping strategies

Reduce feelings of isolation

Learn from others' experiences

Feel less alone

Types available:

In-person groups at hospitals or community centers

Online communities and forums

Mesothelioma-specific support groups

Cancer support groups generally

Caregiver support groups

Bereavement groups for families after loss

Where to find:

Cancer center social work departments

American Cancer Society

CancerCare organization

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

Online forums and Facebook groups

Professional Counseling

When to consider:

Persistent depression or anxiety

Difficulty functioning day-to-day

Thoughts of self-harm

Severe stress affecting health

Family conflict that needs mediation

Anticipatory grief

Bereavement after loss

Types of help

Individual therapy with psychologist or counselor

Marriage or couples counseling

Family therapy

Psychiatrist for medication if needed

Chaplain or pastoral counseling

Often covered by:

Health insurance (check your plan)

Medicare/Medicaid

VA healthcare (for veterans)

Free services through some cancer centers

CancerCare (free professional counseling)

Faith and Spirituality

For many people:

Religious faith provides comfort and hope

Prayer and meditation reduce anxiety

Faith community offers practical and emotional support

Chaplains help process existential questions

Rituals and traditions bring meaning

Available resources:

Hospital chaplains

Church, synagogue, mosque, temple community

Pastoral counseling

Spiritual direction

Prayer groups

Practical Support

What helps families cope:

Meal trains:

Friends and community prepare meals

Reduces burden on family

Shows tangible support

Transportation help:

Rides to medical appointments

Friends helping with errands

Reduces stress of logistics

Financial assistance:

Social work help with benefits applications

Assistance programs through hospitals

Grants from advocacy organizations

Legal compensation to ease financial stress

Household help:

Friends helping with cleaning, yard work

Professional services if affordable

Reducing burden allows focus on what matters

Communication Strategies

From child psychology experts:

Be honest in age-appropriate ways

Don’t hide the illness completely

Let them express feelings

Maintain routines where possible

Reassure them it’s not their fault

Consider child counseling if struggling

Talking with your spouse/partner:

Make time for honest conversations

Express needs directly (hard to read minds under stress)

Accept that you may cope differently

Seek couples counseling if communication breaks down

Remember you're on the same team

Talking with extended family and friends:

Be clear about what help you need

Give permission for people to support you

It's okay to limit visitors when tired

Some people may not know what to say—guide them

Self-Care for Caregivers

From caregiver research:

Caregivers are at high risk for:

Depression and anxiety

Physical health problems

Social isolation

Burnout

What helps:

Take breaks:

Accept respite care offers

Don't feel guilty about needing time away

Maintain some activities you enjoy

Ask for and accept help:

Make specific requests (people want to help but don't know how)

Accept offers of meals, childcare, errands

Use professional services when needed

Maintain your own health:

Keep your own medical appointments

Eat and sleep as well as possible

Exercise, even if just short walks

Take medications if prescribed

Join caregiver support group:

Connect with others in same role

Learn coping strategies

Feel less alone

Signs you need more help:

Can't sleep or sleeping too much

Loss of interest in everything

Anger or resentment toward patient

Physical symptoms (headaches, stomach problems, high blood pressure)

Thoughts of harming yourself

Resources for Emotional Support

National Organization

CancerCare:

Free professional counseling

Support groups

Educational resources

Financial assistance programs

Website: [www.cancercare.org] (http://www.cancercare.org)

Phone: 800-813-HOPE

American Cancer Society:

24/7 helpline

Support groups

Lodging assistance

Rides to treatment

Website: [www.cancer.org] (http://www.cancer.org)

Phone: 1-800-227-2345

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation:

Patient and family support

Mentorship programs

Support groups

Website: [www.curemeso.org] (http://www.curemeso.org)

National Alliance on Mental Illness:

Mental health support and resources

Helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI

For veterans:

VA mental health services

Vet Centers for counseling

Veterans Crisis Line: 988, then press 1

Books and resources:

Many families find comfort in:

Cancer-related books

Memoirs of others' experiences

Guided meditation apps

Journaling

Art or music therapy

Our Role as Your Attorneys

From our experience:

We understand:

Legal matters are secondary to your health and well-being

Stress can be overwhelming

Families need support beyond legal representation

We try to:

Minimize burden on you during difficult time

Handle legal complexities so you can focus on family

Work around medical appointments and health needs

Connect you with resources when we can

Treat you with compassion and respect

Be available when you have questions or concerns

Legal matters we handle that reduce your stress:

Dealing with defendants and their lawyers

Coordinating complex litigation

Hiring and managing expert witnesses

Gathering evidence and documentation

Negotiating settlements

Fighting for maximum compensation so you have financial security

Questions to Ask Your Care Team

- Are there support groups for mesothelioma patients and families?
- Can I see a counselor or therapist? Is it covered by insurance?
- What services does the social work department provide?
- How can I talk to my children about this illness?
- Are there resources for caregiver support?
- What respite care options exist to give my family breaks?
- How do I access palliative care to improve quality of life?

The Most Important Thing

You don't have to face this alone. Support is available—medical, emotional, spiritual, practical, and legal. Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of wisdom and strength.

CHAPTER 31

Living Well with Mesothelioma

Even facing a serious diagnosis, many families focus on living as fully as possible. From our clients' experiences and medical guidance, here are strategies that help.

Remember: We are lawyers, not doctors. This advice comes from what we've learned from our clients and medical literature. Always consult your healthcare team before making changes to your care plan.

Nutrition Strategies

Why nutrition matters:

From medical literature:

Maintains strength and energy

Supports immune system

Helps body tolerate treatment

Improves quality of life

May help with healing

Common challenges:

Loss of appetite from disease or treatment

Nausea from chemotherapy

Difficulty swallowing

Early feeling of fullness

Changes in taste

Fatigue making cooking difficult

What helps:

Eat high-protein, high-calorie foods:

Protein shakes and nutritional supplements

Eggs, fish, poultry, beans

Nuts and nut butters

Full-fat dairy products

Add extra calories where possible (butter, olive oil, cheese)

Small, frequent meals:

Eat 5-6 small meals instead of 3 large ones

Keep healthy snacks readily available

Eat your best meal when you feel hungriest (often breakfast)

Manage side effects:

For nausea: ginger tea, bland foods, anti-nausea medications

For taste changes: try different seasonings, rinse mouth before eating

For early fullness: drink liquids between meals, not with them

For dry mouth: suck on hard candy, use oral moisturizers

Work with professionals:

Registered dietitian specializing in oncology

Can create personalized meal plans

Often covered by insurance

Physical Activity and Exercise

Benefits of staying active:

From medical research:

Reduces fatigue (seems counterintuitive but true)

Maintains muscle strength

Improves mood and reduces depression

Helps with sleep

Maintains independence longer

May improve treatment tolerance

What’s safe and appropriate:

Always check with your doctor before starting exercise program.

Gentle activities:

Walking (start with short distances, gradually increase)

Gentle stretching or yoga

Chair exercises

Light resistance bands

Swimming or water aerobics (if immune system allows)

Tai chi

Avoid:

Overexertion

Contact sports

Activities risking falls or injury

Exercise when fever or infection present

Practical tips:

Start slowly and build gradually

Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, or severe shortness of breath

Exercise when you have the most energy (often morning)

Break activity into short sessions throughout day

Have someone exercise with you for safety and motivation

Consider:

Physical therapy referral

Pulmonary rehabilitation program (for breathing-related issues)

Cancer center exercise programs

Managing Shortness of Breath

Non-medical strategies:

We covered this in Chapter 8, but as reminder:

Positioning:

Sit upright or lean slightly forward

Use extra pillows to prop up in bed

Avoid lying completely flat

Breathing techniques:

Pursed-lip breathing (inhale through nose, exhale slowly through pursed lips)

Diaphragmatic breathing

Breathing exercises taught by respiratory therapist

Environmental:

Use a fan to blow air across your face (surprisingly effective)

Keep room cool and well-ventilated

Avoid smoke, strong perfumes, and air pollution

Use air purifier if helpful

Energy conservation:

Plan activities for when you have most energy

Take frequent breaks

Sit while doing tasks when possible

Let others help with physical tasks

Medical treatments:

Supplemental oxygen (if prescribed)

Medications to ease breathing

Draining fluid if that's the cause

Treating underlying disease with cancer therapies

Pain Management

Pain is common but treatable.

From medical guidelines:

Types of pain:

Dull, constant pain from tumor

Sharp pain from pleural involvement

Nerve pain from tumor pressing on nerves

Pain from treatments or procedures

Treatment options:

Medications:

Start with over-the-counter (acetaminophen, ibuprofen)

Progress to stronger medications as needed (opioids)

Nerve pain may need specific medications (gabapentin, pregabalin)

Don't suffer unnecessarily—pain medications are important

Procedures:

Nerve blocks (injections to numb specific areas)

Radiation to shrink painful tumors

Procedures to drain fluid

Palliative surgery in some cases

Complementary approaches (with doctor approval):

Massage therapy

Acupuncture

Heat or cold packs

Relaxation techniques

Meditation or guided imagery

Important:

Don’t wait until pain is severe to take medication

Taking pain medication as prescribed does not mean you’re “giving up”

Controlling pain improves quality of life and may help you tolerate treatment better

Addiction is rarely a problem when medication is used for real pain

Staying Connected

Social connection is medicine.

From psychology research:

Benefits:

Reduces depression and anxiety

Provides sense of purpose

Creates positive memories

Helps families cope together

Reduces feelings of isolation

Ways to stay connected:

Regular visits (when you feel up to it)

Phone calls and video chats

Shared activities you can still enjoy

Creating memory projects (photo albums, recordings, letters)

With community:

Attend faith services if that's important to you

Join support groups

Participate in activities as energy allows

Accept invitations when feeling well enough

With hobbies and interests:

Adapt hobbies to current abilities

Try new activities that are less physically demanding

Read, listen to music, watch movies

Arts and crafts

Gardening (even container gardens indoors)

Practical tips:

It's okay to say no when you need to rest

Have someone screen visitors when you're not feeling well

Use technology to stay connected with distant family

Don't isolate yourself—human connection helps

Maintaining Routines

Why routines matter:

Provide sense of normalcy

Give structure to days

Create purpose and goals

Support mental health

What to maintain:

Daily routines:

Regular sleep schedule

Morning routines that make you feel good

Mealtimes

Exercise or activity time

Activities you enjoy

Be flexible:

Adapt routines as health changes

It’s okay to adjust or skip when having bad days

Focus on what you can do, not what you can’t

Mental and Emotional Well-Being

Strategies that help:

Mindfulness and meditation:

Can reduce anxiety and stress

Help you stay in present moment

Many apps and guided recordings available (Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer)

Journaling:

Express feelings privately

Process difficult emotions

Create legacy for family

Setting small goals:

Focus on achievable daily or weekly goals

Gives sense of accomplishment

Can be simple (walk to mailbox, call a friend, finish a book)

Finding meaning:

Legacy projects (recording stories, writing letters)

Volunteering or advocacy if able

Spiritual practices

Making peace with past

Expressing love and appreciation to family

Allowing yourself joy:

It’s okay to laugh and enjoy good moments

Pleasure isn’t wrong just because you’re ill

Creating positive memories matters

What to Avoid

From medical guidance:

Risky or unproven treatments:

Be very cautious about “miracle cures”

Discuss any alternative or complementary therapies with your oncologist

Some supplements can interfere with cancer treatment

Some “natural” remedies can be harmful

Isolation:

Withdrawing completely often makes things worse

Stay connected even when it’s difficult

Ignoring symptoms:

Report new or worsening symptoms to your doctor

Don’t try to “tough it out” unnecessarily

Burning bridges:

Disease is stressful, but try to preserve important relationships

Seek counseling if family conflicts are severe

Working With Your Healthcare Team

You're the center of the team.

Your team includes:

Oncologist

Palliative care specialists

Nurses

Social workers

Nutritionists

Physical therapists

Psychologists or counselors

Be an active participant:

Ask questions

Voice your preferences and goals

Tell them what matters most to you

Report symptoms honestly

Follow up on appointments

Questions to Ask

- What can I safely do to stay active and maintain strength?
- Should I see a nutritionist?
- What foods are best for me?

- What complementary therapies are safe to use alongside my treatment?
- How can I better manage specific symptoms (fatigue, pain, breathing)?
- Are there quality of life programs at this hospital?
- What should I avoid doing?
- When should I call you about symptoms?

Our Perspective

From our experience with clients:

The goal is living, not just surviving.

Medical treatment is important

So is quality of life

Balance extends to pursuing both legal rights and life enjoyment

Compensation can support the life you want to live

Don't put life on hold for legal case—we work around your life

What brings our clients joy:

Time with family, especially grandchildren

Travel when able

Hobbies and interests

Making memories and leaving legacies

Advocacy and helping others

Spiritual practices

Simple pleasures—sunrises, good meals, laughter

The most important thing: This is your life. Live it in the way that's most meaningful to you. There's no one right way to face mesothelioma—what matters is what brings you comfort, connection, and peace.

PART V

Resources, FAQs, and Guidance for Families

CHAPTER 32

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

About the Disease

Question: How long after asbestos exposure can mesothelioma develop?

Answer: From medical literature, the latency period is typically 15-50 years, with an average of about 30-40 years. This is why many people diagnosed today were exposed in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s. Some cases occur with shorter or longer latency periods. Even brief exposure can cause disease decades later.

Question: What are the early warning signs of mesothelioma?

Answer: From our clients' experiences and medical records:

Shortness of breath

Persistent chest pain

Chronic cough

Unexplained fatigue

Weight loss

For peritoneal: abdominal pain, swelling, or bloating

These symptoms can mimic other conditions (like pneumonia or heart problems), which is why diagnosis is often delayed. If you have a history of asbestos exposure and these symptoms, tell your doctor specifically about the asbestos exposure.

Question: Is mesothelioma curable?

Answer: Honestly, no—not yet. We have had clients who have lived many years because they sought the best health care and responded well to treatment. There is currently no universal cure for mesothelioma. However, from medical literature:

Some patients have lived for many years with the disease

Treatments can extend life and improve quality of life significantly

Surgery combined with chemotherapy and immunotherapy has helped some patients achieve long-term remission

Clinical trials offer hope for future breakthroughs

Palliative care can provide good quality of life even when cure isn't possible

Question: Can family members who were exposed secondhand also get sick?

Answer: Yes, sadly. From our cases:

Spouses and children of asbestos workers have developed mesothelioma from "take-home" exposure

Asbestos fibers brought home on clothing, skin, or hair caused disease

Wives who washed work clothes were especially at risk

Children who hugged parents after work were exposed

Courts have recognized this secondary exposure and awarded compensation

If you lived with an asbestos worker, tell your doctor and get screened

About Legal Rights

Question: Can I sue even if my asbestos exposure was decades ago?

Answer: Yes. From our legal experience:

The statute of limitations (time limit to file) usually runs from date of diagnosis, not date of exposure

Most states allow 1-3 years from diagnosis to file. You need to speak with lawyer about your state and circumstances.

Courts recognize that disease develops decades after exposure

However, don't delay—evidence becomes harder to find over time and statutes of limitations are strictly enforced

Consult an attorney as soon as possible after diagnosis

Question: Can I sue my employer for asbestos exposure?

Answer: Usually no, but you have other options. From our practice:

Manufacturers of asbestos products you used

In Pennsylvania under the current state of the law you can sue your employer while in most states you can not.

Suppliers of asbestos materials

Premises owners (if you worked at sites owned by others)

Military contractors (if you're a veteran)

You can also file for workers' compensation benefits from your employer

Both can be pursued simultaneously

Question: I'm a veteran. Can I get VA benefits and also file a lawsuit?

Answer: Yes, absolutely. From our experience with veterans:

VA benefits and legal claims are completely separate

You can and should pursue both

VA benefits come from Department of Veterans Affairs

Lawsuits are against asbestos product manufacturers, not the government

Receiving VA benefits does NOT reduce legal recovery

Legal settlements do NOT reduce VA benefits

Many veterans receive both

We help with both processes

Question: What if I smoked cigarettes—does that affect my case?

Answer: From our legal experience:

For mesothelioma: Smoking does NOT cause mesothelioma. Only asbestos causes mesothelioma. Smoking history is generally not relevant to mesothelioma claims.

For lung cancer: This is more complicated. Smoking can cause lung cancer, but so can asbestos. Medical experts can often determine whether asbestos contributed to or caused lung cancer even in smokers. Many successful lung cancer cases involve people who smoked. It may affect the case value but doesn't necessarily prevent recovery.

Defense lawyers will try to blame smoking, but experienced attorneys have medical experts who can address this issue.

About Financial Support

Question: What financial support is available besides lawsuits?

Answer: From our experience, multiple sources may be available:

Asbestos trust funds:

- Over 60 trusts with billions of dollars
- Set up by bankrupt asbestos companies
- Can be accessed relatively quickly (months)
- No trial required
- You may qualify for multiple trusts

VA benefits (for veterans):

- Monthly disability compensation
- Healthcare
- Survivor benefits for families
- Can receive while also pursuing legal claims

Workers' compensation:

- Benefits through employer's insurance
- May include medical costs and wage replacement
- Separate from legal claims

Social Security Disability:

- SSDI or SSI benefits
- Mesothelioma qualifies for expedited processing
- Can receive while pursuing other claims

Insurance:

- Health insurance for medical costs
- Life insurance policies
- Disability insurance through employer

Assistance programs:

Grants from mesothelioma advocacy organizations

Help with travel and lodging for treatment

Co-pay assistance programs

Hospital financial assistance

Question: How long does it take to get compensation?

Answer: From our experience, timelines vary:

Trust fund claims: 6-12 months typically

Some pay within a few months

Depends on trust and completeness of documentation

Lawsuit settlements: 12-24 months on average

Some resolve faster (6-9 months)

Complex cases or trials take longer (18-36 months)

Courts often expedite mesothelioma cases

VA benefits: 3-6 months typically

Depends on completeness of application

Can be expedited in some cases

Workers' compensation: Varies by state

Often a few months for initial benefits

Ongoing benefits continue as long as eligible

About Treatment

Question: Should I get a second opinion?

Answer: Yes. From medical guidelines and our experience:

Mesothelioma is rare—many doctors have never treated it

Second opinions from mesothelioma specialists are strongly recommended

Major cancer centers (Memorial Sloan Kettering, Dana-Farber, MD Anderson, Penn Medicine) have mesothelioma experts

Second opinions can identify additional treatment options

Most insurance covers second opinions

It won't offend your local doctor—they expect and support this

Question: Should I participate in a clinical trial?

Answer: From medical literature, this is a personal decision to discuss with your oncologist:

Potential benefits:

Access to cutting-edge treatments not yet available otherwise

Close monitoring by research teams

May offer hope when standard treatments haven't worked

Contribute to advancing medical knowledge

Considerations:

Experimental treatments may or may not work

Possible side effects may not be fully known

May require travel to research centers

Time commitments for monitoring

May need to meet specific eligibility criteria

Your oncologist can help evaluate whether a clinical trial is appropriate for your situation.

Question: What about alternative or complementary treatments?

Answer: From medical guidance:

Complementary therapies (used alongside standard treatment):

May be helpful: meditation, acupuncture, massage, yoga

Discuss with your oncologist first

Make sure they don't interfere with cancer treatment

Some supplements can interact with chemotherapy

Alternative treatments (used instead of standard treatment):

Be very cautious

"Natural" doesn't always mean safe or effective

Many promoted "cures" are scams preying on desperate people

Delaying proven treatments can allow cancer to progress

Discuss any alternative treatment with your oncologist

Our recommendation: Work with your medical team. Complementary approaches that improve quality of life can be valuable additions to standard care, but don't abandon proven treatments for unproven alternatives.

About Family Matters

Question: How do I talk to my children or grandchildren about this?

Answer: From child psychology guidance:

Be honest in age-appropriate ways:

Young children (5-10): Simple explanations, reassurance they're not at fault, what will change in daily life

Tweens (11-14): More details about illness and treatment, involvement in some decisions

Teens (15+): Adult-level information if they want it, allow them to be involved

Key points:

Don’t hide the illness completely—children sense something is wrong

Encourage questions

Reassure it’s not their fault

Maintain routines where possible

Consider counseling if they’re struggling

Let school know so teachers can watch for problems

Question: How can I support my spouse/partner who has mesothelioma?

Answer: From caregiver resources:

Practical support:

Help with medical appointments and decisions

Manage medications and schedules

Handle household tasks

Provide physical care as needed

Emotional support:

Listen without trying to “fix” everything

Allow them to express fears and sadness

Share your own feelings appropriately

Don’t pretend everything is fine

Respect their choices about treatment and care

Take care of yourself:

Accept help from others

Take breaks when possible

Maintain your own health

Join caregiver support groups

Consider counseling for yourself

CHAPTER 33

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

When meeting with your medical team, bring a notebook or support person. These questions can guide the conversation.

Remember: We're attorneys, not doctors. We share these questions based on what we've learned would have been helpful for our clients to ask. Your medical team should provide the answers.

About Diagnosis and Staging

What type of mesothelioma do I have? (pleural, peritoneal, etc.)

What is the stage of my disease?

Has the cancer spread beyond where it started?

How did you determine the diagnosis? (biopsy results, imaging, etc.)

Can you explain my pathology report in terms I can understand?

Should I get a second opinion? Can you recommend a mesothelioma specialist?

About Treatment Options

What are all my treatment options based on my specific situation?

What treatment do you recommend and why?

What is the goal of the recommended treatment? (cure, control, symptom relief)

Am I a candidate for surgery? What type?

If not surgery, why not? Could I become eligible later?

What chemotherapy drugs would I receive? How will they be given?

Is immunotherapy an option for me?

Are there clinical trials I should consider?

What happens if this treatment doesn't work—what are the next options?

About Clinical Trials

Are there clinical trials currently enrolling that I might qualify for?

What experimental treatments are being studied for mesothelioma?

How do I find appropriate clinical trials?

Can you refer me to cancer centers conducting trials?

What are the pros and cons of trial participation versus standard treatment?

About Treatment Effects

How will treatment affect my daily life?

What side effects should I expect?

How can side effects be managed?

When should I call you about side effects?

Will treatment affect my ability to work or care for my family?

How often will I need to come for treatment?

Will I need to be hospitalized?

About Prognosis

What is the likely course of my disease?

What is a realistic life expectancy for someone with my diagnosis and health status?

What factors might make my prognosis better or worse?

How will we know if treatment is working?

How often will I have scans or tests to monitor my condition?

About Quality of Life and Symptom Management

What can be done to help me breathe better?

How can we control my pain?

What palliative care services are available?

Can palliative care be provided while I'm receiving active treatment?

When should we consider hospice care?

What can I do to maintain my strength and quality of life?

Are there services to help with fatigue, nutrition, or other symptoms?

About Care Coordination

Who should I call if I have questions between appointments?

Will you work with my local doctor?

How will you communicate with other specialists involved in my care?

What should I do in an emergency?

Can treatment be done close to home, or must I travel?

About Support Services

Are there support groups for mesothelioma patients and families?

Can I meet with a social worker to discuss resources?

Is counseling available for emotional support?

What resources exist to help with practical needs (transportation, lodging, financial assistance)?

Are there resources specifically for caregivers?

About Advance Planning

What advance care planning should I do now while I'm able?

How do I make my treatment preferences known if I become unable to communicate?

Whom should I designate to make medical decisions if I can't?

What should my family know about what to expect as the disease progresses?

Tips for Doctor Appointments

From our clients' experiences

Bring someone with you to take notes and remember information

Write questions down beforehand so you don't forget

Don't be afraid to ask "why?" if you don't understand

Take notes or ask if you can record the conversation (with permission)

Ask for written information about treatment plans

Get copies of test results and reports for your records

Speak up if something doesn't seem right

Ask doctor to slow down if they're going too fast

Remember: There are no stupid questions. This is your health and your life. You have the right to understand what's happening and to participate in decisions about your care.

CHAPTER 34

Questions to Ask Your Lawyer

From our 40+ years of practice, these are the questions you should ask when choosing an attorney to handle your asbestos case.

About Experience and Expertise

How long have you been handling asbestos and mesothelioma cases specifically?

How many mesothelioma cases have you handled?

What were the outcomes of those cases?

Do you handle these cases regularly, or are they just part of your practice?

Have you handled cases with exposure circumstances similar to mine?

Are you familiar with the industry where I was exposed? (shipyards, construction, etc.)

Have you represented veterans with military asbestos exposure? (if applicable)

About Case Strategy

How will you investigate my asbestos exposure?

What resources do you have for product identification and exposure evidence?

Who are the likely defendants in my case?

Will you pursue both lawsuits and trust fund claims?

How do you determine which approach is best for my case?

Will my case be filed individually, or grouped with others?

How do you decide whether to settle or go to trial?

Have you tried mesothelioma cases to verdict? What were the results?

About the Legal Process

What will the timeline likely be for my case?

What will I need to do personally? (depositions, providing information, etc.)

How much time will be required from me?

Will I need to travel? How often?

Can my deposition be done by video if I'm too ill to travel?

What happens if my health declines during the case?

How do you handle cases where the client passes away during litigation?

About Fees and Costs

What is your contingency fee percentage?

Does the percentage change if we go to trial?

What costs will be involved, and who pays them upfront?

What happens to costs if we don't win?

Will I owe you anything if we don't recover compensation?

Do you charge separately for trust fund claims?

Can I see a written fee agreement before I commit?

When and how will I be paid if we win?

About Communication

Who will be my primary contact at your firm?

How often will you update me on my case?

How quickly do you respond to phone calls and emails?

Will I be able to speak directly with an attorney, or mainly with staff?

How do you explain legal concepts to clients unfamiliar with the process?

Will you keep my family informed if I want them to be included?

About Your Firm's Resources

How many attorneys work on asbestos cases at your firm?

What is your average caseload per attorney?

Do you have in-house investigators and paralegals who specialize in asbestos cases?

What expert witnesses do you work with?

Does your firm have the financial resources to fund expensive litigation?

Have you ever had to decline a case because of cost?

If your exposure was take-home (secondary):

Have you handled secondary exposure cases before?

What evidence will you need to prove take-home exposure?

Can family members file claims for secondary exposure?

If you have lung cancer (not mesothelioma):

Do you handle asbestos-related lung cancer cases?

I smoked—does that prevent me from having a claim?

How do you prove asbestos caused or contributed to lung cancer in smokers?

About Compensation

What types of compensation might I be eligible for?

How do you maximize compensation from all available sources?

How long will I receive payment after settlement or verdict?

Will compensation be taxable? (generally no for personal injury, but confirm)

About Your Rights and Protections

What are my rights as your client?

Can I change lawyers if I'm not satisfied?

What if I disagree with your recommendation about settlement?

What if defendants offer a settlement I don't think is fair?

Do I have the final say on whether to settle or go to trial?

Red Flags to Watch For

From our experience, be concerned if a lawyer:

Can't provide specific information about their asbestos experience

Won't answer fee questions clearly

Pressures you to sign immediately

Makes guarantees about specific settlement amounts

Seems unfamiliar with mesothelioma or your type of exposure

Won't provide references or examples of results

Has poor communication or doesn't return calls

Seems more interested in volume than your individual case

What to Look for in Responses

The right attorney should:

Answer your questions clearly and patiently

Provide specific information about their experience

Explain the process in terms you understand

Be honest about both strengths and challenges in your case

Make you feel heard and respected

Demonstrate knowledge of asbestos litigation

Have a clear plan for investigating and proving your case

Be accessible and communicative

Our Answers to These Questions

We welcome all these questions and are happy to answer them in detail during a free consultation. Here are a few of our answers:

Experience: 40+ years of complex litigation practice including extensive asbestos work

Resources: Established relationships with top medical and industrial hygiene experts, comprehensive databases for product identification, dedicated team

Communication: Direct attorney contact, regular updates, work around your schedule

Fees: Contingency basis (typically 33-40%), we advance all costs, written agreement provided, no fee if we don’t win.

Track record: Significant settlements and verdicts throughout our history, experience with all types of exposure scenarios

Philosophy: We fight for justice, leave no stone unturned, put people first, treat you with compassion and respect

But don’t just take our word—ask us these questions directly and evaluate the answers for yourself.

CHAPTER 35

Key Resources for Families

Here are valuable resources organized by category. We've included contact information current as of 2025, but please verify as organizations sometimes change.

Medical Information and Treatment Resources

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Website: [www.cancer.gov] (http://www.cancer.gov)

Phone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

Services: Trusted information about cancer, treatment options, clinical trial search database

Mesothelioma-specific page: [www.cancer.gov/types/mesothelioma](http://www.cancer.gov/types/mesotheliom

American Cancer Society (ACS)

Website: [www.cancer.org] (http://www.cancer.org)

Phone: 1-800-227-2345 (24/7 helpline)

Services: Patient education, support services, lodging assistance (Hope Lodge), rides to treatment, online communities

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation (MARF)

Website: [www.curemeso.org] (http://www.curemeso.org)

Phone: (805) 563-8400

Services: Patient support, support groups, symposiums, research funding, patient navigation

Email: info@curemeso.org

CancerCare

Website: [www.cancercare.org] (http://www.cancercare.org)

Phone: 1-800-813-HOPE (1-800-813-4673)

Services: Free professional counseling, support groups, educational programs, financial assistance

Specialized mesothelioma program

Treatment Centers with Mesothelioma Programs

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Location: New York, NY

Website: [www.mskcc.org] (http://www.mskcc.org)

Known for: Leading mesothelioma research and treatment, thoracic oncology expertise, clinical trials

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute / Brigham and Women's Hospital

Location: Boston, MA

Website: [www.dana-farber.org] (http://www.dana-farber.org)

Known for: Mesothelioma program, partnership with VA Boston, research

MD Anderson Cancer Center

Location: Houston, TX

Website: [www.mdanderson.org] (http://www.mdanderson.org)

Known for: Comprehensive cancer care, mesothelioma research, clinical trials

University of Pennsylvania (Penn Medicine)

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Website: [www.pennmedicine.org] (http://www.pennmedicine.org)

Known for: CAR T-cell therapy development, immunotherapy research, thoracic oncology

Mayo Clinic

Locations: Rochester, MN; Phoenix, AZ; Jacksonville, FL

Website: [www.mayoclinic.org] (http://www.mayoclinic.org)

Known for: Comprehensive mesothelioma care, multidisciplinary approach

Resources for Veterans

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Website: [www.va.gov] (http://www.va.gov)

Main phone: 1-800-698-2411

Benefits phone: 1-800-827-1000

Services: Disability compensation, healthcare, benefits for surviving families

VA Boston Healthcare System

Specialized mesothelioma program

Partnership with Dana-Farber and Brigham and Women's

Phone: (857) 364-6200

Veterans Service Organizations (Free Help with Claims)

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Website: [www.dav.org] (http://www.dav.org)

Phone: 1-877-426-2838

American Legion

Website: [www.legion.org] (http://www.legion.org)

Phone: 1-800-433-3318

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

Website: [www.vfw.org] (http://www.vfw.org)

Phone: 1-833-VFW-VETS

Emotional and Practical Support

CancerCare (also listed above for medical)

Free professional counseling

Support groups (online and in-person)

Financial assistance for practical needs

The Wellness Community / Cancer Support Community

Website: [www.cancersupportcommunity.org] (http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org)

Phone: 1-888-793-9355

Services: Support groups, educational programs, wellness programs

American Lung Association

Website: [www.lung.org] (http://www.lung.org)

Phone: 1-800-LUNGUSA

Services: Resources for breathing issues, support networks, pulmonary rehabilitation information

Local Hospice and Palliative Care Providers

Find through: [www.nhpco.org] (http://www.nhpco.org) (National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization)

Services: End-of-life care, symptom management, family support, bereavement services

Financial Assistance and Practical Help

Patient Advocate Foundation

Website: [www.patientadvocate.org] (http://www.patientadvocate.org)

Phone: 1-800-532-5274

Services: Help with insurance, medical bills, employment issues, financial navigation

HealthWell Foundation

Website: [www.healthwellfoundation.org] (http://www.healthwellfoundation.org)

Phone: 1-800-675-8416

Services: Co-pay assistance, premium assistance, financial grants

Needy Meds

Website: [www.needymeds.org] (http://www.needymeds.org)

Phone: 1-800-503-6897

Services: Information on patient assistance programs, discount cards for medications

Social Security Administration

Website: [www.ssa.gov] (http://www.ssa.gov)

Phone: 1-800-772-1213

Services: Disability benefits (SSDI, SSI), compassionate allowances for mesothelioma

Legal Resources

Cohen, Placitella & Roth

Over 40 years representing mesothelioma patients and families

Free consultations

Contingency fee basis—no cost unless we win

Offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania

Nationwide representation

Asbestos Trust Funds

Administered by various bankruptcy trustees

Access through experienced asbestos attorneys

Over 60 trusts with billions of dollars available for victims

ClinicalTrials.gov

U.S. government database of clinical trials

Search for mesothelioma trials by location and treatment type

Maintained by National Institutes of Health

Inspire Online Support Communities

Website: [www.inspire.com] (http://www.inspire.com)

Free online communities for various health conditions

Mesothelioma and lung cancer support groups

Facebook Groups

Various mesothelioma support groups

Caregiver support groups

Memorial groups

Search “mesothelioma support” on Facebook

Transportation and Lodging Assistance

American Cancer Society Hope Lodge

Website: [www.cancer.org/hopelodge]
(http://www.cancer.org/hopelodge)

Phone: 1-800-227-2345

Free lodging near treatment centers for patients and caregivers

Corporate Angel Network

Website: [www.corpangelnetwork.org]
(http://www.corpangelnetwork.org)

Phone: 1-866-328-1313

Free air transportation to treatment using corporate aircraft

National Patient Travel Center

Website: [www.patienttravel.org] (http://www.patienttravel.org)

Phone: 1-800-296-1217

Helps arrange long-distance medical travel

Air Charity Network

Website: [www.aircharitynetwork.org] (http://www.aircharitynetwork.org)

Phone: 1-877-621-7177

Arranges free flights for medical treatment

Books and Educational Materials

"100 Questions & Answers About Mesothelioma" by Harvey I. Pass, MD

Comprehensive patient guide

"Surviving Mesothelioma and Other Cancers: A Patient's Guide" by Paul Kraus

Written by long-term mesothelioma survivor

American Cancer Society Publications

Free publications on various cancer topics

Available through [www.cancer.org] (http://www.cancer.org)

National Cancer Institute Publications

Free booklets on cancer treatment, symptoms, caregiving

Order through [www.cancer.gov] (http://www.cancer.gov) or 1-800-4-CANCER

Research and Advocacy Organizations

International Mesothelioma Interest Group (iMig)

Website: [www.imig.org] (http://www.imig.org)

International collaboration on mesothelioma research

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)

Website: [www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org] (http://www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org)

Education and advocacy to ban asbestos

State-Specific Resources

For New Jersey residents:

NJ Department of Health Asbestos Registry

Local cancer support organizations

Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey: [www.cinj.org] (http://www.cinj.org)

For Pennsylvania residents:

- PA Department of Health cancer resources
- Penn State Cancer Institute
- Thomas Jefferson University Hospital
- Local veterans' organizations

Mobile Apps That May Help

Medication Management:

- Medisafe, MyTherapy, CareZone

Symptom Tracking:

- [Cancer.Net] (http://Cancer.Net) Mobile, Belong

Meditation and Relaxation:

- Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer

Important Notes About Resources

Phone numbers and websites can change—verify before relying on them

Many services are free, but some may have costs

Not all resources will be right for every person

Take time to explore what's available

Don't hesitate to ask for help—that's what these resources are for

How We Can Help Connect You

From our experience:

We've worked with many of these organizations over 40 years

We can help you navigate available resources

We'll connect you with support services when appropriate

We understand the medical, legal, and practical challenges you're facing

Our goal is comprehensive support, not just legal representation

- Conclusion: Moving Forward with Hope and Support

CHAPTER 36

Final Guidance for Families

After 40 years of representing mesothelioma patients and their families, we've walked this difficult journey with thousands of people. We know that a diagnosis of mesothelioma or asbestos-related lung cancer changes everything in an instant. Life divides into "before diagnosis" and "after diagnosis."

You Are Not Alone

The most important message we can share: You are not alone. Families across the country have faced the same shock, fear, and uncertainty you're experiencing right now. The path forward is challenging, but there is support available—medical, emotional, practical, and legal.

The Most Important Steps

From our experience, these are the most critical actions:

Seek Specialized Medical Care

Mesothelioma is rare—only about 3,000 cases diagnosed in the U.S. each year. Most community oncologists have little experience with it. Seek care from specialists who treat mesothelioma regularly.

Major cancer centers with mesothelioma programs:

Have seen hundreds or thousands of cases

Know the latest treatments and clinical trials

Understand nuances other doctors might miss

Can provide second opinions even if you continue local treatment

Don’t wait. Get that specialist consultation while you have time and options.

Explore All Treatment Options

Medicine has advanced significantly in recent years:

Standard therapies (surgery, chemotherapy, radiation) are more refined

Immunotherapy is extending survival for many patients

Clinical trials offer access to cutting-edge treatments

Palliative care can dramatically improve quality of life

Multimodal approaches combining treatments often work best

Don’t assume there’s nothing that can be done. Ask about every option. Research clinical trials. Get second opinions. Be your own advocate.

Protect Your Legal Rights

If your mesothelioma or asbestos-related disease resulted from occupational exposure, you have legal rights. This isn’t about being greedy or litigious—it’s about:

Justice: Holding companies accountable that exposed you without proper protection or warnings

Financial security: Ensuring your family has resources for the future

Accessing resources: Compensation can support medical care, travel to treatment centers, and family needs

Time limits apply. Statutes of limitations vary by state but are typically 1-3 years from diagnosis. Evidence becomes harder to find over time. Don’t delay seeking legal advice.

Pursue Multiple Avenues

Asbestos trust fund claims

Lawsuits against responsible companies

Workers' compensation (if applicable)

VA benefits (for veterans)

Social Security Disability

An experienced attorney can pursue all applicable sources simultaneously.

Lean on Support Systems

This journey is too difficult to face alone:

Medical support:

Oncology team

Palliative care specialists

Social workers

Nutritionists

Mental health professionals

Emotional support:

Support groups (patients and caregivers)

Professional counseling

Faith communities

Friends and family

Online communities of people who understand

Practical support:

Help with meals, transportation, household tasks

Financial assistance programs

Caregiver respite services

Patient advocacy organizations

Legal support:

Experienced attorneys who understand both the disease and your rights

Help navigating complex litigation while you focus on health

Accepting help is strength, not weakness. People want to support you—let them.

Focus on Quality of Life

Treatment matters, but so does living well with whatever time you have:

Medical treatment to extend life and control symptoms

Palliative care to maximize comfort and function

Emotional support to maintain mental health

Social connections to reduce isolation

Activities that bring joy and meaning

Legacy work and memory-making

Spiritual practices if meaningful to you

This is about living, not just surviving. Make time for what matters most to you.

What We've Learned from Our Clients

Over 40 years, our clients have taught us important lessons:

Each Person's Journey is Unique

There's no "right way" to face mesothelioma

What matters to one person may differ from what matters to another

Your values and priorities should guide decisions

Make choices that feel right for you, not what others expect

Hope Comes in Many Forms

Hope for cure or long remission

Hope for time with family

Hope for comfort and dignity

Hope for justice and accountability

Hope that your case will help others

Hope that each day can have meaning

Strength Shows in Many Ways

Fighting aggressively for every possible day

Choosing quality of life over quantity

Being vulnerable and accepting help

Making peace with mortality

Focusing on relationships and legacy

Standing up for your rights

All of these are forms of strength and courage.

What Brings Peace

Our clients have found peace through:

Knowing they did everything possible

Connecting deeply with loved ones

Resolving past conflicts

Sharing their stories

Creating legacies

Fighting for justice

Faith and spirituality

Making each day count

What We Offer

As attorneys, our role is specific but important:

Legal Expertise:

40+ years of experience with asbestos litigation

Deep knowledge of exposure sources, products, and responsible companies

Proven track record of significant results

Resources to fully investigate and prove your case

Compassionate Service:

We treat you as a person, not a case number

We work around your medical schedule

We minimize burden on you and your family

We fight for what's right while respecting your priorities

Comprehensive Approach:

Pursue all sources of compensation

Help connect you with medical resources

Coordinate with VA benefits and workers' comp

Provide support beyond just legal matters

No Financial Risk:

Free consultation

Contingency fee—no cost unless we win

We advance all litigation costs

No hidden fees

Our Promise

We promise to:

Fight relentlessly for maximum compensation

Treat you with dignity and respect

Keep you informed throughout the process

Honor your decisions about settlement versus trial

Be there when you need us

Never give up on justice for you and your family

Looking Forward

The road ahead is challenging, but you don't walk it alone. Medical advances continue. Support systems exist. Legal rights protect you. People care and want to help.

What happens next is up to you:

Medical decisions: Consult with specialists, explore all options, choose treatment that aligns with your goals

Legal matters: Contact an experienced attorney, understand your rights, protect your family's future

Support needs: Reach out to organizations, join support groups, accept help from loved ones

Daily living: Focus on quality of life, make memories, do what brings you joy and peace

Taking the Next Step

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with mesothelioma or asbestos-related lung cancer:

Contact us for a free consultation:

No obligation, no pressure

Confidential discussion of your situation

Clear explanation of your legal rights and options

Honest assessment of your case

Information to help you make informed decisions

We're here to help.

Not just as attorneys, but as people who have walked this journey with thousands of families and deeply respect the challenges you're facing.

You didn't cause this disease. Companies that exposed you to asbestos without protection bear responsibility. You have rights. Your family deserves justice and financial security. We're here to fight for both.

This guide is provided for educational purposes based on our 40+ years of legal experience representing mesothelioma patients. Medical information is based on published literature and is not medical advice. Always consult qualified medical professionals for treatment decisions and experienced attorneys for legal matters specific to your situation.

Attorney advertising. Prior results do not guarantee similar outcomes.

References and Sources

The medical information in this guide is based on published literature and expert testimony from cases we've handled. Key sources include:

Medical and Scientific:

National Cancer Institute Mesothelioma Treatment Guidelines

American Cancer Society publications on mesothelioma

Peer-reviewed medical journals including Cancer Discovery, Nature Medicine, JCI Insight

Mayo Clinic and major cancer center resources

FDA approval documents for mesothelioma treatments

Clinical trial results from ClinicalTrials.gov

Legal:

40+ years of case experience at Cohen, Placitella & Roth

Court documents and testimony from asbestos litigation

Corporate documents revealed in discovery

Expert witness testimony from medical and industrial hygiene professionals

Organizations:

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Social Security Administration

State health departments

Specific Research Papers Cited:

Adusumilli PS, et al. “Regional mesothelin-targeted CAR T-cell therapy.” Cancer Discovery 2021;11(11):2748-2763

Hassan R, et al. “Mesothelin-targeting T cell receptor fusion construct therapy.” Nature Medicine 2023;29:2099-2109

Yang YY, et al. “Affinity-tuned mesothelin CAR T cells.” JCI Insight 2024;9(22):e186268

For complete references and citations, consult the original published sources. This guide summarizes information for educational purposes and does not replace professional medical or legal advice.