

Asbestos in Drinking Water

Nearly everyone is aware of the health hazards of inhaling asbestos fibres from ceiling tiles and insulation. But asbestos found in drinking water also can be hazardous to your health.

Asbestos, which is a fibrous mineral sometimes used for fireproofing, has long been used to strengthen the cement used to construct water pipes. It was commonly used for this purpose until recently. Asbestos also is naturally found in some types of rocks and therefore is often found in well water and in surface supplies near mining operations.

Although asbestos in drinking water is regulated today, it still can be found in drinking water, from big cities to smaller rural areas. Asbestos is known to cause several types of cancer, including colon cancer.

It can enter the human body by being inhaled and by being ingested through food or drink.

Water

Asbestos enters water in several ways. Many water sources naturally contain asbestos, and standard municipal filtration is not completely effective at removing it.

The chemistry of the water also affects how much asbestos enters the water.

The more corrosive the water, the more likely it is to liberate asbestos fibres. As water travels through asbestos cement pipes, corrosion can free small fibres from the walls of the water pipes, which are then carried by the water to your tap.

When municipalities detect asbestos in the water, they can alter the water chemistry accordingly to reduce corrosiveness, much as they do to prevent corrosion of lead.

Detecting Asbestos in Your Drinking Water

Asbestos cannot be detected by our senses. The best

way to determine its presence is to ask the waterworks for a copy of their latest tests.

If you have a private well, inquire at the provincial or county health department or environment office about local soils.

Protection against Asbestos

The best way to protect yourself is to remove it from the water. This can be done easily by a point-of-use (POU) water filtration system certified for Asbestos Reduction by NSF International under standard No. 53: Health Effects.

NSF International is an independent testing agency that sets product standards for manufacturers of POU systems. A POU system is a simple and cost-effective way to protect yourself from asbestos and many other water contaminants.

Typically the size of a household fire extinguisher, POU systems designed for residential use are installed under the kitchen sink and are plumbed from the cold water line. Filtered water is served through a dedicated faucet to dispense water for drinking and cooking.

Peace of mind

Remember to always look for filtration products that are NSF certified. NSF is a not-for-profit co. founded in 1944 to promote good sanitation. NSF maintains state-of-the-art laboratories where products can be tested according to the set standards. NSF standards are recognized around the world, including the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).