

Is it correct that asbestos has previously been cleaned up in our buildings? If so, why wasn't Galbraith building cleared then?

CMDHB has previously undertaken a number of building projects where the removal of asbestos was necessary. Where asbestos was identified, it was removed by specialist contractors.

These works were not DHB wide but focused on specific building projects, undertaken to ensure the DHB was able to expand its facilities to meet the health needs of a rising population.

Is asbestos harmful?

Bonded asbestos-containing materials, used prior to 1990 which remain intact and in good order, are not considered to pose a significant health risk.

Asbestos poses a health risk only when it is inhaled (breathed in) as fine dust. Asbestos fibres once inhaled are not easily removed by the lungs. The health risk increases with the number of fibres inhaled and with frequency of exposure, and in the presence of other factors such as smoking.

No 'safe' lower limit of exposure has been identified. The risk from a single, low-level exposure is considered to be extremely low.

Once the health risks of asbestos were known, asbestos importation and use in New Zealand was gradually stopped. However, asbestos-containing material in products and appliances may still be around, particularly in buildings built before 1990.

Your health and safety is paramount.

If you have any further questions,
please contact the
CMDHB Hazardous Substance Advisor
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Managing Asbestos

Q&A's



How is it being managed

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral made up of many small fibres. These fibres are very durable and highly resistant to heat, fire and chemical corrosion.

In the past many products were manufactured containing asbestos as a result of these special properties, particularly in the manufacture of construction materials including many cement, flooring, insulation and thermal products.

Asbestos-containing products, widely used in the construction of many public buildings including hospitals and schools, include:

- cement sheet, draining pipes, spouting and guttering components, super 6 roofing
- vinyl flooring and adhesives
- insulation and electrical board
- textured ceilings, sprayed-on coatings and fireproofing
- lagging around pipes, in heaters and hot water cylinders

When is asbestos a health risk?

Asbestos presents the greatest health risk when asbestos fibres are inhaled.

Bonded asbestos containing materials in good condition such as vinyl flooring, cement sheeting and sealants, are considered to present minimal risk to health.

Poor condition friable asbestos-containing material, such as weathered cement roofing, fire insulation and pipe lagging, present the greatest risk to health as fibres are easily released into the air.

How is CMDHB ensuring staff, patients and visitors are safe from asbestos?

Health and safety is the main priority for CM Health.

As a large organisation managing multiple buildings, CM Health has in place an asbestos management program to identify and safely manage asbestos-containing materials within its older buildings.

Where asbestos-containing materials could be of concern, CM Health has developed and implemented a range of controls to safely manage these sources. Controls include air monitoring, asbestos removal, safe work procedures, restricting work activities and access.

Air monitoring is undertaken as part of remediation/removal work and where a potential risk has been identified or monitoring has been recommended.

In the Galbraith building we have undertaken both types of air monitoring:

- During remediation work (in accordance with the current code of practice and regulation) within the basement plant rooms, sub-basement and PABX room. As further remediation projects are approved, we will continue to carry out appropriate monitoring.
- In areas that have undergone initial assessment and air monitoring has been recommended, including the basement (corridor, Phlebotomy, PABX, plant rooms 4 and 6, and Clinical Records), the operating rooms, and laboratory.

Assurance monitoring continues to be carried out in:

- Corridor Basement - twice weekly since Sept 2017
- Operating Rooms – x1 per 2 months since August 2017
- Plant Room 6, post remediation scheduled 1x per 3

None of the locations being monitored to date have exceeded the lowest recordable level, trace level (0.01 fibres/ml).

How will remediation be carried out?

All remediation work is, and has been, conducted by experienced, qualified and WorkSafe NZ approved asbestos removalists working in line with the health and safety (asbestos) regulations.

Where remediation works are required, affected staff are informed and, if necessary, relocated prior to works commencing.

Control of asbestos

Asbestos in the workplace is controlled by the Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998, regulated by WORKSAFE NZ and administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The Building Act 2004, and the New Zealand Building Code clause F2 Hazardous Building Materials, control the use of asbestos in buildings and are administered by your local authority.