



# Pleural thickening

## Bringing a claim

Pleural thickening is a lung disease in which extensive scarring thickens the pleural membrane (the thin lining that surrounds the lungs and the chest wall) and is often caused by asbestos exposure. As the scar tissue gets thicker, it can prevent the lung from expanding and makes breathing more difficult.

The condition most commonly takes 15 to 20 years before doctors make a diagnosis. It may develop after limited exposure to asbestos.

As the disease progresses, patients may experience chest discomfort and breathlessness. The damage is irreversible and therapies to treat the disease's symptoms include pulmonary rehabilitation, steroids and oxygen and occasionally surgery or draining any residual fluid from the lungs.

Pleural thickening may remain stable, but due to their past exposure to asbestos, sufferers may be at an increased risk of developing mesothelioma, an asbestos related cancer of the lung.

## Legal issues

### How to claim

Compensation is generally available under the normal injury claim rules. This means that a claim can be brought up to three years from the date of knowledge of the issue, which in most cases is when the sufferer was told about the condition (diagnosed).

In order to bring a claim, it is important to know when and how the asbestos exposure took place. It is also important to be able to identify which employers were at fault. There are various ways of tracking down former employers (and their insurers if they have gone out of business) but the more information available at the outset, the easier it is to make a claim.

Information such as:

- any correspondence from previous employers (including wage slips, pension documents, Contracts of Employment, Apprentice indentures etc)
- contact details of former colleagues with whom you worked alongside, who may be able to confirm the circumstances of asbestos exposure
- a diagnosis letter from your consultant.

will be very valuable.

