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BERKELEY • DAVIS • SAN FRANCISCO

## DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE

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***Pay Attention to Your Health***  
**What You Should Do For Medical Care**  
**If You Have Been Exposed to Asbestos**

If you are or were exposed to a hazardous substance such as asbestos, several factors determine whether harmful health effects will occur. These factors include characteristics of the exposure such as the dose (how much), the duration (how long), the route or pathway by which you are exposed (breathing, eating, drinking, or skin contact), and your individual characteristics such as age, sex, nutritional status, family traits, life styles (SMOKING), and state of health.

**IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS**

Your employer is required by law to institute a **MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM**:

- If you work in construction and are covered by the construction standard (8 CCR 1529), your employer is required by law to institute a medical surveillance program if you are, for 30 days per year or more, engaged in Class I, II, or III asbestos work or are exposed above the permissible exposure limit (PEL) which is 0.1 fibers/cc.
- If you work in industry and are covered by the general industry standard (8 CCR 5208) your employer is required by law to institute a medical surveillance program if you are exposed to asbestos above the PEL (0.1 fibers/cc) or excursion level (1 fiber/cc for up to 30 minutes).

The **MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM** shall include a pre-placement examination, periodic/annual examination, and a termination examination. The exam shall adhere to Cal/OSHA standards and include an asbestos questionnaire, complete updated medical and work history, complete physical examination, spirometry, counseling on smoking cessation, need for appropriate respiratory protection and work practices, and good health measures to decrease risks of cancer and increases cardiopulmonary tone. Chest x-rays shall be offered on the following schedule unless there is the development of new respiratory symptoms:

- Workers under 40 years old and less than 10 years since first exposure: PA and Obliques every three years
- Workers under 40 years old and more than 10 years since first exposure: PA annually and obliques every 3 years
- Workers 40 or more years of age: PA annually and obliques every 3 years

We know that many construction employers do not comply with these requirements. Nevertheless, you must pay attention to your health. Have regular check-ups and share this information with your doctor or medical care provider.

**IF YOU HAVE PAST EXPOSURE TO ASBESTOS**

The frequency of medical follow-up for asbestos-exposed individuals takes many variables into account, particularly an individual's cancer risk. Patients who were exposed to asbestos and have a smoking history in the past 10 years should be seen yearly. Asbestosis progresses slowly, usually more than 10 years, and requires follow-up every 3 years. All recommendations are guidelines only. Your doctor may change follow-up frequency based on clinical judgment.

- Asymptomatic and non-significant exposure history (defined as less than 5 years of asbestos exposure and/or asbestos exposure occurring less than 10 years ago). These individuals should receive counseling on cancer signs and symptoms, smoking cessation, education on nutrition and good health measures such as exercise and weight control to decrease risks of cancer and increase cardiopulmonary tone.
- Patients with significant exposure history (greater than 5 years of asbestos exposure occurring more than 10 years ago) who have a negative smoking history. Follow-up should take place every 3 years and should include a PA chest x-ray\*, spirometry (breathing test), a complete physical examination, and a rectal exam for individuals over 45 years of age. They should also receive the counseling as stated above.
- Patients with significant exposure history (greater than 5 years of asbestos exposure occurring more than 10 years ago), a positive history for smoking within the past 10 years. Follow-up will include review of a health questionnaire, a PA chest x-ray\*, spirometry, a complete physical examination, and a rectal exam for individuals over 45 years of age. These individuals should receive counseling as stated above.

\*The frequency of chest x-rays should ultimately be determined by the clinician on a case-by-case basis. All chest x-rays must be read by a certified B-Reader.