

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

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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.