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Dust Diseases Care



Pleural plaques

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What are the pleura?

The pleura are the two natural layers that surround each lung. One is attached to the surface of the lung and the other is attached to the inside of the chest wall.

How does dust get into the pleural?

Lungs have natural defense mechanisms that are normally able to expel most dust particles. Sometimes these mechanisms can't remove some types of dust, such as asbestos, completely. Why? Because asbestos dust is made up of microscopic fibres that can make their way through the lungs to reach the pleura where, over time, they may cause scarring.

What are pleural plaques?

Pleural plaques are patches of scar tissue that occur on the pleura. They are smooth, white, raised irregular areas of fibrous tissue, and they vary in size from small to large.

Pleural plaques do not affect breathing and are not cancerous.

Who develops pleural plaques?

Not every person who has been exposed to asbestos will develop pleural plaques, but they are commonly seen on x-rays in people who have been exposed.

How are pleural plaques diagnosed?

Over many years the body deposits small amounts of calcium in pleural plaques. Many people develop pleural plaques without ever knowing it. Plaques generally won't become evident until at least 10 years after exposure to asbestos dust.

Do they require treatment?

No. Pleural plaques don't produce any symptoms and generally don't affect normal lung function and breathing.

Do pleural plaques turn into a dust disease?

No. Pleural plaques themselves don't turn into a dust disease, though some people with pleural plaques may also develop a dust disease.

Ongoing health monitoring?

If you are diagnosed with pleural plaques we will offer ongoing respiratory health monitoring examinations to check whether you have developed a dust disease.

If you are still employed in an occupation where you are at risk of asbestos you are entitled to health monitoring provided by their employer. Your employer can provide ongoing health monitoring throughout your employment with them.

If you have left the employment where you were exposed to asbestos, you can request a free medical examination provided by Dust Diseases Care every three years.

Can I be compensated for pleural plaques?

Compensation is not payable for pleural plaques.

Would you like more information?

If you have any questions at all or would like more information, please contact Dust Diseases Care by calling (02) 8223 6600 or 1800 550 027 (toll free), or emailing DDAenquiries@icare.nsw.gov.au.

You can also find more information about Dust Diseases Care and our services on our website www.icare.nsw.gov.au