

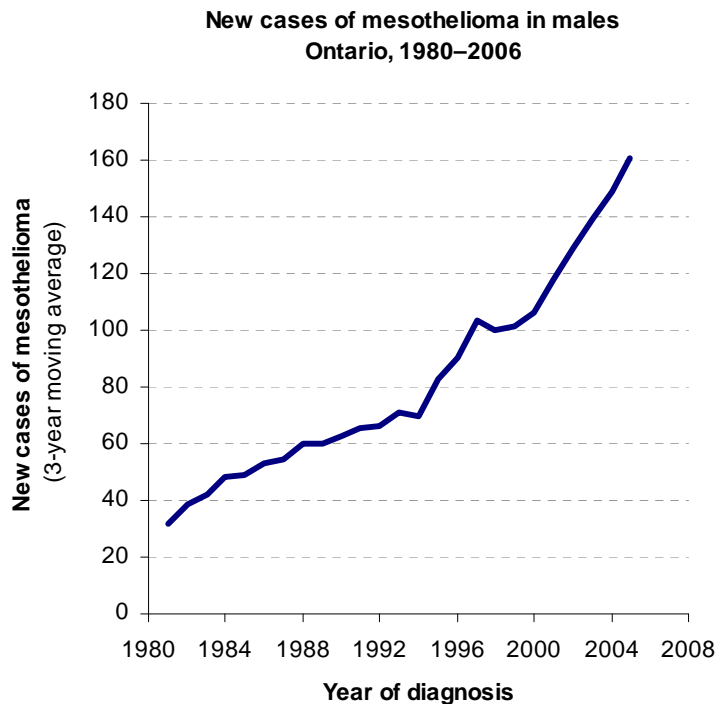
Continued rise in new cases of mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a rare but highly fatal cancer that is closely tied to asbestos exposure. At least 65% of cases of mesothelioma are thought to be related to asbestos exposure at work. Although it can occur in a number of body sites, the most common location is the layer of tissue lining the chest cavity called the pleura.

Between 1980 and 2006, the number of mesothelioma cases among men rose steadily from about 30 to 177. Over the same time period, age-standardized incidence rates also increased, from 0.7 per 100,000 to 2.0 per 100,000. Symptoms of mesothelioma often do not appear until 20 to 40 years after exposure. Therefore most individuals diagnosed in 2006 were likely exposed to asbestos in the 1960s or 1970s, before asbestos was added to the Hazardous Products Act in 1985 or identified as a designated substance in the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1986. However, construction workers may still be exposed through maintenance, renovation and demolition of buildings containing asbestos. It is uncertain when mesothelioma incidence will begin to decline in Ontario.

Although a high proportion of mesothelioma patients, or dependants of deceased patients, may be eligible to receive workers' compensation, claims were filed for only 35% of mesothelioma patients diagnosed between 1980 and 2002 (1). Filing rates were highest in communities with a history of high asbestos exposure and increased community awareness of the link between this cancer and asbestos. Physicians can play an important role in educating patients and their families of their potential entitlement to compensation benefits.

Cancer Care Ontario, as part of a partnership with the Occupational Cancer Research Centre, is currently working on predicting future trends in mesothelioma incidence. The Occupational



Source: Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Cancer Registry, 2009)

- The number of cases of mesothelioma continues to rise.
- Despite the strong relationship between asbestos exposure at work and mesothelioma, many patients do not file for workers' compensation.

Cancer Research Centre is jointly funded by Cancer Care Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division, and was developed in collaboration with the United Steelworkers union. The centre is working to identify, prevent and ultimately eliminate Ontarians' exposure to cancer-causing substances in the workplace.

For more information, see:

- Rise in mesothelioma cases reflects past asbestos use (November 2004 cancer fact)
<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/cms/one.aspx?pageId=9714>
- A model for occupational carcinogen exposure surveillance in Ontario (May 2005 cancer fact)
<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/cms/one.aspx?pageId=9693>
- Occupational Cancer Research Centre (OCRC)
<http://www.cancercare.on.ca/research/ocrc/>
- Hazardous Products Act
<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showtdm/cs/H-3//20090923/en>
- Ontario Ministry of Labour Health and Safety Regulations
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/leg/ohsa_regs.html Ontario
- Occupational Health and Safety Act:
 - R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 837 Designated Substance — Asbestos
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900837_e.htm
 - Ontario Regulation 278/05 Designated Substance — Asbestos On Construction Projects And In Buildings And Repair Operations
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_050278_e.htm and
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/revokedregs/english/elaws_rev_regs_900838_e.htm
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/Public/workersasbestosrelatedddiseases>
- Health Canada
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/envIRON/asbestos-amiante-eng.php>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/>
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp61.html>

References

1. Payne J and Pichora E. Filing for workers compensation among Ontario cases of mesothelioma. *Canadian Respiratory Journal* (in press).

Citation: Material appearing in this Cancer Fact may be reproduced or copied without permission. The following citation must be used:

Cancer Care Ontario. Cancer Fact: Continued rise in new cases of mesothelioma. September 2009. Available at <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/ocs/csurv/ont-cancer-facts/>.

Ontario Cancer Facts are produced by Population Studies and Surveillance.

Cancer Care Ontario
www.cancercare.on.ca

Email: cancerfacts@cancercare.on.ca

