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Mesothelioma is a rare type of cancer whose only known cause is asbestos exposure. Although the cancer is not common in the general population, people who have worked around asbestos frequently develop mesothelioma after inhaling or swallowing asbestos fibres. The disease, which can remain hidden for years, most often develops in the lining surrounding the lungs called the Mesothelium. Exposure to asbestos for prolonged periods in workplaces such as construction, military and industrial sites can result in mesothelioma decades later. It is also possible for workers to bring asbestos home on their clothes or body, exposing people in their household to the dangerous substance.

Symptoms of Mesothelioma

Symptoms of mesothelioma include breathlessness, chronic cough, chest pain and fatigue. But the symptoms are not limited to just these. This type of cancer quite often is initially misdiagnosed as influenza or other related ailments.

Types of Mesothelioma

There are three kinds of mesothelioma. The most aggressive form is pleural mesothelioma, which is also the most common type. Nearly 75 percent of people diagnosed with the illness suffer from pleural mesothelioma. It affects the pleura, which is the outer coating covering the lungs and the chest cavity. The disease causes a fluid build-up between the lungs and the chest, and an effusion of the pleura can lead to chest pain and trouble breathing.

Peritoneal mesothelioma is a less common type, accounting for fewer than 20 percent of all cases. This type of cancer affects the peritoneum, which is a thin membranes that covers the inside of the abdomen wall, enclosing the abdominal organs. Peritoneal mesothelioma causes fluid to accumulate in the abdomen, resulting in abdominal pain and swelling.

The third type is pericardial mesothelioma. This very rare type of mesothelioma affects the pericardium or the membrane that surrounds the heart. Due to its rarity, pericardial mesothelioma is very difficult to diagnose. Its symptoms – including chest pain, heart murmurs and fatigue – are often misinterpreted as signs of other cardiac conditions.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Mesothelioma

Doctors use several types of health-care technology to detect and diagnose mesothelioma. The first option is normally an X-ray, but this usually does not have sufficient resolution to spot the cancer. A CT scan is more sophisticated and can deliver a detailed image to help diagnose mesothelioma. MRI scans give an even better picture, but PET scans are the more powerful tool for identifying tumours. Yet another tool is the PET-CT, which combines both scans into a single machine.

After a proper diagnosis, the doctor will suggest a treatment strategy depending on the stage of the cancer. Conventional treatments include surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. There are also experimental therapies that might be available on an individual basis. Despite treatment, the life expectancy for mesothelioma victims is only about a year or so. Because of the disease's relative rarity and its aggressive nature, it is important to seek an experienced mesothelioma doctor who is up-to-date with the most recent research in this field.

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[Mark Caursten](#) - About Author:

a [Mesothelioma](#) cancer and other diseases caused by Asbestos impact thousands of families. Treatment for mesothelioma typically involves a multi-modal approach. We provide tools for education and coping.

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