

## Three Popular Items To Be Cautious About

Collecting antiques is a hobby almost as old as antiques themselves. Humans have even discovered a 2500-year old museum that housed artifacts which were ancient at the time.



But antique collecting comes with some hazards. From faulty equipment to toxic content, old objects may be dangerous, and antique collectors and enthusiasts must take great caution when handling, buying, and restoring vintage items.

One of those dangers - especially for antiques from the 1800s or 1900s - is the presence of asbestos and asbestos fibers, which have been shown to cause a variety of health problems, including respiratory illnesses and cancers of the lung and throat.

#### The Dangers of Asbestos





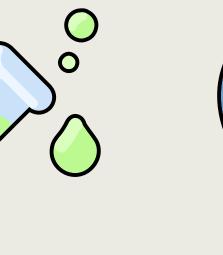
The ancient Greeks gave asbestos its name, because it resists:





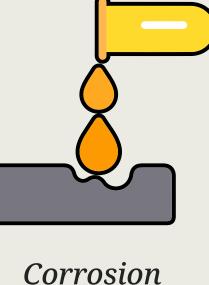
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Acid





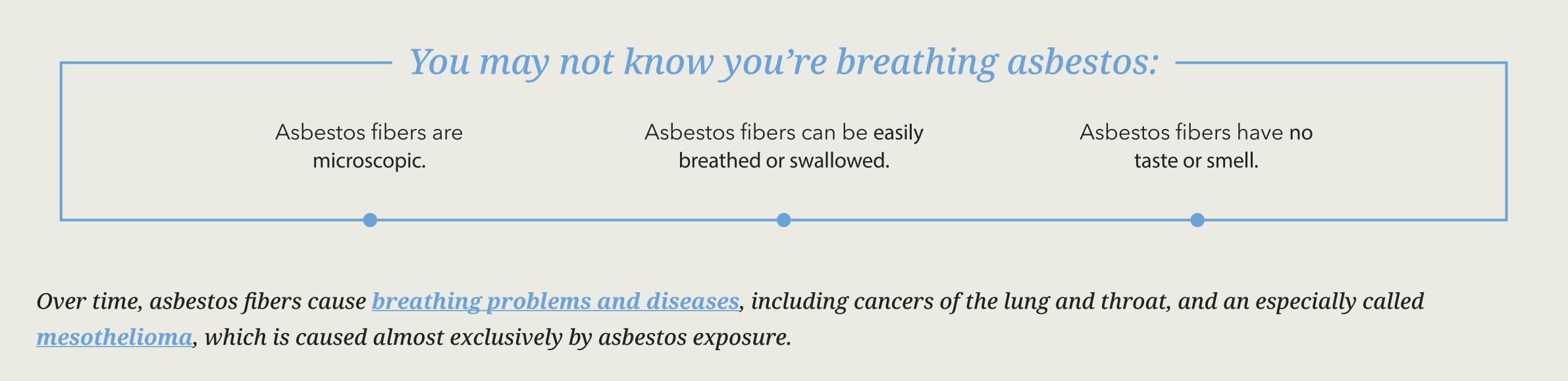
Pressure/Sound



That's why throughout the late 1800s and much of the 1900s, product manufacturers used asbestos to make all kinds of industrial and consumer products.

Electricity

But unfortunately, asbestos releases fibers into the air that can be breathed in or swallowed and can become embedded in the body.



Here are three popular antique items that may contain asbestos:

# Fake Snow and Fake Snow and Mas Ornaments



Creating fake snow to decorate house-and-home is a time-honored tradition, but in years gone by, the material used to create this effect was made from asbestos.



Nevertheless, Christmas ornaments make for popular antiquing items, so any that feature fake snow must be treated with caution.

### A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU



 Fake snow has been used to decorate homes, schools, churches, and movie sets for many decades, and in the 1930s, the material used was asbestos-based. In fact the snow seen in the film The Wizard of Oz was actually made of asbestos. Manufacturing fake snow from asbestos was fairly short-lived, as the second world war created a need for the fire-retardant material to be used on Navy ships.

Additionally due to the fire-retardan

Additionally, due to the fire-retardant nature of asbestos, manufacturers also used it to produce Christmas tree skirts, mats, and tablecloths from the same era.

Vintage hairdryers and other household appliances



The number of domestic gadgets soared in America after the second world war, leaving many fascinating asbestos-containing collectibles now out on the antiquing market.

Most antique home appliances do not present any significant risk of asbestos exposure unless they are taken apart or damaged. Hairdryers, however, are the exception to this rule.



Vintage hairdryers can feature soft, friable asbestos insulation layers that enclose the heating element. When in use, the heated airflow can therefore contain asbestos fibers.





In the late 1700s, the arduous task of ironing was revolutionized by the invention of the 'sad iron.'

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Sad irons were heavy and had to be picked up using a cloth or mitt as the handle was also made of metal and could scold the user. Named after an old English word meaning 'solid,' sad irons were heavy steel irons that were heated on a fire and used to remove wrinkles from clothing.



The original design was improved with a removable handle, and then a model using asbestos to help insulate the handle.

Before gas and electric irons replaced them, asbestos-lined sad irons were very popular, selling up to half a million annually.

> Today, sad irons are very popular as antique collectibles. They make great vintage-styled home decor items, and are commonly used as doorstops.



In many cases, the asbestos covers are no longer present. However, when they are, the fine fibers from the lining can still pose a risk of asbestos exposure and related disease.



We can't escape the fact that asbestos was once used widely without understanding the dangers it presents. Similarly, humans' love for and fascination with historical items is not going anywhere.

Therefore antique enthusiasts should use caution - as well as proper protective equipment like goggles, gloves and in some cases even respirators - when considering handling or purchasing any new vintage items.

### Studies show there is no safe level of asbestos exposure.<sup>1</sup>

*People have developed asbestos-related illnesses 40 or 50 years after they were first exposed.*<sup>2</sup>

# *If you believe you have been exposed to asbestos in the past, or if you have symptoms of an* <u>*asbestos-related illness, contact a healthcare professional.*</u>

Treating asbestos-related illnesses can involve expensive hospital bills and medications, as well as lost wages and limitations in your lifestyle. But compensation is available for spouses, household members and others with illnesses affected by their secondary exposure to asbestos.<sup>3</sup> Speak to an experienced <u>asbestos attorney</u> to understand your options.

<sup>1</sup> Lanphear, B.P. and Buncher, C.R., 1992. Latent period for malignant mesothelioma of occupational origin. JOM, 34(7), pp.718-721.

<sup>2</sup> Pierce, J.S., McKinley, M.A., Paustenbach, D.J. and Finley, B.L., 2008. <u>An evaluation of reported no-effect chrysotile asbestos exposures for lung cancer and</u> <u>mesothelioma.</u> Critical Reviews in toxicology, 38(3), pp.191-214.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, B., 2017. <u>Take-Home Toxin: Following Kesner's Lead and Creating a Consistent Framework for Determining Duty toward Victims of Secondary Asbestos Exposure.</u> Md. L. Rev., 77, p.1166. In 1972, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) set up regulations on asbestos to protect workers and their families from being injured by asbestos. Many state and federal courts have said that these regulations are also to protect spouses and others exposed by coming into contact with the workers. Spouses have recovered money for injuries caused by their secondary asbestos exposure.

To learn more, click here  $\rightarrow$ 



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