

The most common way for asbestos fibers to enter the body is through breathing. In fact, asbestos containing material is not generally considered to be harmful unless it is releasing dust or fibers into the air where they can be inhaled or ingested. Many of the fibers will become trapped in the mucous membranes of the nose and throat where they can then be removed, but some may pass deep into the lungs, or, if swallowed, into the digestive tract. Once they are trapped in the body, the fibers can cause health problems.

Asbestos is most hazardous when it is **friable**. The term "friable" means that the asbestos is easily crumbled by hand, releasing fibers into the air. Asbestos-containing ceiling tiles, floor tiles, undamaged laboratory cabinet tops, shingles, fire doors, siding shingles, etc. are not highly friable and **will not typically release asbestos fibers** unless they are disturbed or damaged in some way.

### Health Effects

Since it is difficult to destroy asbestos fibers, the body cannot break them down or remove them once they are lodged in lung or body tissues. There are three primary disease