



ACT
Government

**Asbestos Response
Taskforce**



ACT
Government
Health

19 August 2015

Support Info Sheet

TOPIC: Homeowners and Tenants- Managing Change and Transition

The demolition of Canberra houses affected by 'Mr Fluffy' loose fill asbestos has now commenced and will continue for a number of years. This may evoke some of the same emotions that you felt when you were advised of the presence of asbestos, as well as/or feelings of grief for the loss of your home and your connectedness to your community.

Normal reactions to stress, grief and loss

- Sadness
- Frustration
- Anger
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritable
- Numbness
- Feelings of helplessness

It is important to know that for most people, these feelings usually settle over a few weeks, particularly with support from family and friends and the adherence to normal routines.

Some people may take more time to adjust to the loss of their house and surrounding environment and may find their normal routines disrupted. These people may require additional support. Please refer to How to Access Help section in this information sheet.

Positive ways of coping include:

- Supporting one another-especially in your family/workplace/community
- Providing emotional support -comforting each other
- Sharing your experience and feelings with others if this feels right to do
- Carrying out practical tasks – tackling the jobs that need to be done a bit at a time and counting each success
- Looking after your own and your family's general health – rest, exercise, food and company all help (being careful not to drink too much alcohol or use other substances)

Phone **ACCESS CANBERRA 13 22 81**
Web **www.act.gov.au/asbestostaskforce**

Email **asbestostaskforce@act.gov.au**
Twitter **@TaskforceACT**

When to ask for extra help

Sometimes ongoing feeling of distress, grief and worry can affect your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

It's time to ask for help if:

- Your sleep is badly affected
- You feel very distressed, irritable or on edge much of the time
- You feel hopeless, despairing, and miserable or feel that you can't go on
- You have trouble concentrating, are distracted and cannot do your usual tasks
- You feel your health is not so good
- You experience recurrent nightmares
- You experience new symptoms or some old problems may have returned, e.g. breathing, heart and stomach problems.

Children

Children may tune in to parental distress and worry about asbestos related issues. Parents and carers can help by answering children's questions honestly, acknowledging concerns and fears in an age-appropriate manner. Remember that routine is important for children (and adults), particularly at times when other things around them (e.g. accommodation) may be changing.

For children, the following may indicate the need for professional help:

- Withdrawal
- Aggressive behaviour
- Difficulties at school
- Problems separating from parents
- Problems going to sleep

For additional information please refer to the Mental Health and Wellbeing- Supporting children during adversity, uncertainty and change information sheet on the Asbestos Response Taskforce website.

How to access help:

A range of options is available to assist those who may be experiencing distress.

- The **NewAccess Program** is provided at no cost through the Capital Health Network and offers support from trained coaches for those who are experiencing **mild anxiety or depression**. People registered with the Asbestos taskforce can self-refer to this service by phoning the central intake number on **6287 8066**. The coaches provide evidence based, low intensity psychological strategies and support, either face to face or over the phone, for up to 6 sessions.
- For anyone who is experiencing **moderate anxiety or depression**, your usual **family doctor** can complete a mental health treatment plan and provide referral for free sessions with a **psychologist** under the Capital Health Network's **HealthinMind program**. For those registered with the Asbestos taskforce, any 'gap' fee for the GP visit will be reimbursed to ensure that there is no out-of-pocket expense. The Capital Health Network will ensure priority access to NewAccess coaches and HealthinMind psychologists for people registered with the Asbestos Taskforce.
- For any **urgent/crisis mental health concerns**, particularly in relation to acute stress and/or risks to the immediate safety of individuals, please contact the **Mental Health Triage** intake line on **1800 629 354**.
- **Your GP** and their practice staff will also be able to assist you with information about the risks to your physical health of potential asbestos exposure.

Other supports available:

- Lifeline (24 hours) 131114
- School Counsellors
- Employment Assistance Program (EAP)

Advice in this document provided by ACT Health

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