



## Mesothelioma

---

 [drishtiias.com/printpdf/mesothelioma](https://drishtiias.com/printpdf/mesothelioma)

### Why in News

---

There have been allegations against Johnson & Johnson that its Baby Powder (talcum powder) contains asbestos which can cause Mesothelioma, a type of rare cancer.

- Talc or talcum is a **naturally occurring clay mineral** mined from the earth which is used in baby powder because of its ability to absorb moisture.
- Mines that collect talc also **contain asbestos** that has been linked to health risks like **mesothelioma and asbestosis**.

### Key Points

---

- **Malignant mesothelioma** is an aggressive and deadly form of cancer that occurs in the thin layer of tissue that covers the majority of internal organs (mesothelium).
- It is **divided into different types** based on what part of the mesothelium is affected.
  - **Pleural mesothelioma**- affects the tissue that surrounds the lungs (pleura).
  - **Peritoneal mesothelioma**- affects the tissue in the abdomen.
  - **Pericardial mesothelioma**- affects the tissue around the heart.
  - **Mesothelioma of tunica vaginalis**- affects the tissue surrounding the testicles.
- **Symptoms**
  - Chest pain
  - Painful coughing
  - Unusual lumps of tissue under the skin on chest
  - Unexplained weight loss
  - Abdominal pain
  - Abdominal swelling
  - Breathing difficulty
- Signs and symptoms of other types of mesothelioma are unclear since these forms of the disease are very rare.

- **Prevention**

**Reducing exposure to asbestos** may lower the risk of mesothelioma.

Asbestos exposure is the primary risk factor for this disease.

## Asbestos

---

- It is a **mineral that is found naturally in the environment**. Asbestos fibres are **strong and resistant to heat**, making them useful in a wide variety of applications, such as in insulation, brakes, shingles, flooring and many other products.
- During the mining process or removal of asbestos insulation, **asbestos dust** is created which settles in the lungs or in the stomach if inhaled or swallowed. They can cause irritation that may lead to mesothelioma and **asbestosis**.
  - It can take 20 to 60 years or more for mesothelioma to develop after asbestos exposure.
  - However, the exact process of this is still not understood.
  - **Asbestosis** is a **chronic, inflammatory lung disease**, but it's **benign**. Its sole cause is asbestos exposure.
- Most people with asbestos exposure never develop mesothelioma indicating that other factors like inheriting a predisposition to cancer may be involved in determining whether someone gets mesothelioma.