

### **If you spent significant time in a shipyard – you may have been exposed to lung cancer (Mesothelioma)**

Naval ships for years have used asbestos, particularly on steam plants. Those who were in shipyards for new construction or overhauls in particular, had more exposure to asbestos airborne fibers due to the installation or removal and reinstalling of asbestos. Also nuclear personnel as a result of extended periods in the shipyards, are more likely to have had extensive exposure.

**What is Mesothelioma?** Although sometimes referred to as "asbestos lung cancer", Mesothelioma is not the same as lung cancer. Lung cancers occur *inside* the lung itself; Mesothelioma occurs in the *lining* of the lung. Mesothelioma is rare, striking fewer than 3000 Americans per year. Simply put, Mesothelioma which is commonly referred to as asbestos cancer, is an aggressive cancer caused primarily by the inhalation of dangerous asbestos fibers.

**How do you get malignant Mesothelioma?** Most people with malignant Mesothelioma worked on jobs where they breathed asbestos. Others were exposed to asbestos in a household environment, often without knowing it.

#### **How much exposure does it take to get the disease? What is the latency period?**

Very little exposure can result in Mesothelioma. Sometimes people who worked with asbestos for as little as one or two months get Mesothelioma. The "latency period" refers to the time between asbestos exposure and diagnosis of the disease. For Mesothelioma, the latency period can be decades long, and people exposed in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s are now being diagnosed. Statistics show that, because of their work history, the disease most often affects men between the ages of 50 and 70 who were employed in an asbestos-laden environment before asbestos warnings and bans were in place in the 1970s.

#### **What are the symptoms of Mesothelioma?**

It is important to seek professional medical advice when trying to diagnose for Mesothelioma. The major symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath caused by expanding pleural effusion
- Persistent dry cough

Other symptoms may include:

- Fatigue
- Night sweats
- Fever
- Pain under the rib cage
- Swelling or lumps in the abdomen
- Unexpected weight loss

#### **What should I do if I think I've been exposed to asbestos but don't think you have Mesothelioma?**

You probably will not get this rare disease, but you should remain vigilant and get regular check-ups. *Let your doctor know about your asbestos exposure!*

Several nuclear submariners from the 60's and 70's have already been diagnosed with this disease and/or passed away (most showed no sign of it) – if you fall into the exposure category, if you do nothing else – inform your doctor that you have been exposed – the earlier detection the better.