

## WHAT KIND OF RESULTS ARE POSSIBLE?

The occupational health team's physician will give you the results of your screening X-ray. Your file will be kept by the occupational health team in your territory of residence.

Three kinds of results are possible:

### **A positive result**

There are signs indicating the possibility of asbestosis in your lungs.

### **A negative result**

There are no signs of asbestosis in your lungs at present.

### **A negative result with signs of other diseases requiring medical follow-up**

The radiologist may find abnormalities unrelated to asbestosis in the chest X-ray and suggest that other complementary medical examinations be carried out.

In the case of abnormal results, you will be notified and advised to consult your family physician.

With your consent, the occupational health team's physician will send the results of your X-ray to your attending physician.

## IS THERE ANY FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE INITIAL SCREENING?

### **Screening follow-up**

All workers exposed to asbestos, whether or not they show signs of asbestosis on the initial X-ray, will be screened periodically.

Workers with asbestosis will be referred to lung specialists for the medical services they require. They may file an application with the CSST for compensation and rehabilitation.

### **Status report**

A Québec-wide status report will be prepared and submitted to employers' associations, unions and all partners involved in the intervention program. This report will contain no personal data or data by which individuals with asbestosis can be identified.

For more information, feel free to contact your territory's occupational health team.

To find the contact information for your team, please consult the following Website:

[www.santeautravail.qc.ca/equipres](http://www.santeautravail.qc.ca/equipres)

[www.msss.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca)

Santé  
et Services sociaux  
Québec



OPERATION

SCREENING FOR

ASBESTOSIS



Intervention  
program for the  
prevention of  
asbestos-related  
occupational  
diseases

Québec



## SCREENING FOR ASBESTOSIS

The intervention program for the prevention of asbestos-related occupational diseases has been implemented in all regions of Québec. It is aimed at controlling the risks of exposure to asbestos in order to prevent new cases of pulmonary disease among construction and maintenance workers.

The targeted groups are insulation workers, plumbers and pipe fitters, sheet metal workers and tinsmiths, boilermakers, fire protection mechanics and labourers specializing in asbestos removal and labourers specializing in demolition.

### *You undoubtedly have questions*

**Why you?**

**What are the dangers of asbestos fibers?**

**Why should you have the x-ray?**

**What does the screening consist of?**

**What kind of results are possible?**

**Is there any follow-up after the initial screening?**

## WHY YOU?

You have been selected for screening because you work in a trade in which you may have been exposed to asbestos in the course of construction, renovation, maintenance or demolition work. You are therefore invited to have a chest X-ray in order to be screened for asbestosis.

### *Asbestos*

Asbestos is a mineral whose fibres are used in such products as ties, building insulation, pipe insulation, boilers, etc.

The asbestos fibres in brittle materials break off easily when handled, on impact and when subjected to vibration. They are then released into the ambient air and the smallest fibres can be inhaled into the lungs.

## WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF ASBESTOS FIBERS?

### *Asbestosis*

After quite intense exposure to asbestos, the lungs can no longer rid themselves of the inhaled fibres. The fibres settle in lung tissue and gradually cause pulmonary fibrosis. This is known as "asbestosis."

In Québec, between 1988 and 1997, 174 new cases of asbestosis were diagnosed among construction workers, which represent more than 46% of all the cases reported in the province (378).

### *Asbestos and cancer*

Breathing asbestos fibres also increases the risk of developing lung cancer. However, the screening program is only aimed at detecting asbestosis, because chest X-rays are not recommended as an effective screening method for lung cancer.

Asbestos fibres can also cause a rare cancer called mesothelioma, even at low exposure levels. Generally, this type of cancer appears 30 to 40 years after exposure to these fibres. It is unfortunately too late to intervene when this highly malignant cancer is found.

### *Pleural plaques (Benign Lesions)*

Asbestos also causes plaques on the pleura (the lining of the lungs) that are visible on an X-ray. These plaques indicate that the worker has been exposed to asbestos, although he has not developed asbestosis.

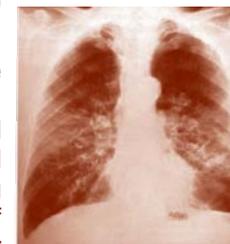
## WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE THE X-RAY?

### *To find out about the health of your lungs following exposure to asbestos fibres*

It takes at least 15 years from initial exposure for asbestos-caused fibrosis to show up on a chest X-ray. This is why the workers selected for the screening program have more than 15 years of seniority in the industry.

The X-ray is performed solely for the purpose of finding signs of asbestosis. This is the only asbestos-related disease for which screening of exposed individuals is effective at detecting health problems before the onset of symptoms and early enough for preventive measures to slow the progression of the disease.

It is in the best interests of a worker who has been exposed to asbestos but does not yet have the disease to find out about the health of his lungs. With a better knowledge of the risks, he can demand and use personal protection when performing high-risk work.



## WHAT DOES THE SCREENING CONSIST OF?

The screening of work-related pulmonary diseases is under the jurisdiction of occupational health agencies mandated by the CSST. Since this is a provincial program, an occupational health team will invite you to undergo your chest X-ray.

It is important to bring your health insurance card and your social insurance card with you to your appointment.

The screening will take about an hour. First, a nurse will evaluate with you whether you have been exposed to asbestos in your work. You will then undergo the X-ray.

A few weeks later, you will be given your results individually and confidentially.