



Clydeside Action  
on Asbestos

# Personal Stories

Real Lives: Living with an Asbestos Related Condition.



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[www.clydesideactiononasbestos.org.uk](http://www.clydesideactiononasbestos.org.uk)

# Personal Stories

## Real Lives: Living with an Asbestos Related Condition.

Being diagnosed with an asbestos related condition can sometimes trigger strong feelings and emotions. Some people may feel angry that they were never warned of the dangers of asbestos, others may feel shocked because their exposure to asbestos happened so many years ago.

You may feel concerned about how your condition will affect the way you live your life. Some of our support group members wanted to share their experiences of how they felt when they were diagnosed, and how they feel now.



### **Derek was diagnosed with pleural plaques in 2011. Here's what he had to say.**

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“I am a joiner to trade and was exposed to asbestos in 1986, when working on new flats in Edinburgh. I didn't give it much thought at the time, as I didn't know that the boards I was cutting contained asbestos. In 2011, I was told by my GP that I had pleural plaques. The diagnosis came as a huge shock and I didn't take in a lot of the information that my GP told me.

The first thing that I did was give up smoking, as I was worried about my health. My GP referred me to a chest consultant and I felt much better once I had spoken to the consultant as he explained that pleural plaques

weren't harmful. Looking back, I believe that if my GP had given me information that I could take away and digest, I would have understood my diagnosis and possibly worried a lot less.

I have been told that because I was exposed to asbestos I could possibly develop another condition in the future, but I can't waste energy worrying about something that might never happen. It is much more important to focus on the things that matter to me. For me, the best way forward is to keep things in perspective and not waste energy getting worked up."



## **When John was diagnosed with asbestosis, he was concerned about the impact this would have on his ability to look after his wife.**

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"I had mixed emotions when I was diagnosed with pleural plaques and asbestosis. I was relieved at first as I was a heavy smoker in the past and I thought that I had cancer. When my consultant explained that I had asbestosis, I was really shocked. I look after my wife and was worried about how I would manage. I was diagnosed in 2013 and for the first few months I tried to find out as much as I could about what I could expect in the future. It took me a while to realise that I could still do the things I used to do. As long as I did things at my own pace, I would be fine.

Two years on, I just take my time and don't rush. I keep active and when I get out of breath walking, I have a rest then carry on. Staying active and doing things at a pace that suits me has helped me. I do get out of breath sometimes but I won't let it stop me from living my life."



**Gordon was 40 when he was diagnosed with asbestosis.**

**There wasn't much information available about his illness, and he was anxious about his future.**

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“At first, I was blown away with the diagnosis. I felt that my future was uncertain and became stressed, especially since I had a young family.

It was as if I had hit a brick wall and I didn't really understand what the consultant was telling me, so I started to take my sister with me to appointments and between us we began to get a better understanding of my illness.

I had been exposed to asbestos when I was 17 when I worked in a shipyard, labouring for joiners. I went on to work for the local authority and noticed that I was getting breathless doing jobs that I had been doing for years. I never thought for a minute that my time in the yards would be the reason for my breathlessness.

I was frustrated that I had been exposed to asbestos but then I made a decision; I was only 40 and I was not going to let this hold me back. I decided to do all I could to be healthy; eat well, stay positive and relax. That was 21 years ago.

But don't get me wrong, I am realistic about my limitations, and I have to live my life within the boundaries of what I can do. I can't change the fact that I have an asbestos related disease but I can choose how I live my life. I stay positive and do everything I can to enjoy life.”



## **For Ralph, by understanding the different asbestos related conditions, he was able to come to terms with his diagnosis.**

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“When I was diagnosed with pleural plaques and pleural thickening I didn’t understand what I had been diagnosed with. I felt really despondent. I thought that I was in the first stages of what would inevitably become mesothelioma or lung cancer. I now know that one asbestos related condition does not become another. For me, understanding what I had been diagnosed with was really important. Once I had a better understanding, I was able to get things in perspective. I still feel angry that my employer did not protect me from being exposed to asbestos but I don’t let it get on top of me. I go along to one of CAA’s support groups and talking to the people there really helps. I have learned a lot from listening to the speakers that sometimes come along to the group.”



## **Keeping positive and staying active has helped Ken to live with asbestosis.**

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“I went to my GP with a cough and breathlessness last year and was referred to a chest consultant at the hospital for an X-Ray and CT scan. The consultant explained to me that I had asbestosis and pleural plaques. I was shocked and felt quite low as I thought I wouldn’t be able to do all the things that I enjoyed doing. Over the last year though, I have kept cycling and make sure I keep active. If things take longer than they used to, so what! I just slow down my pace. I try to make sure that I plan ahead, and if I can’t do all the things I had planned to do in a day, I just do them the next day. It is about staying positive and making the most of what you can do.”

Further information about our services can be found at:

**[www.clydesideactiononasbestos.org.uk](http://www.clydesideactiononasbestos.org.uk)**

Contact us

Freephone: **0800 089 1717**

Email: **[admin@clydesideaction.co.uk](mailto:admin@clydesideaction.co.uk)**

The stories in this leaflet reflect just a few of our member's journeys. It is important to remember that every condition is different and people manage things in many different ways. Planning ahead, allowing enough time to do activities, staying active and understanding their illness have all helped the people who have shared their story here. If you would like more information about managing your condition see our other information leaflets and DVD, or contact CAA to find out if there is a support group in your area.

The information in this leaflet is not intended to be medical advice, a replacement for medical advice or an instructional manual. Any information contained within is for information purposes only and are undertaken at your own risk without any liability to Clydeside Action on Asbestos.

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