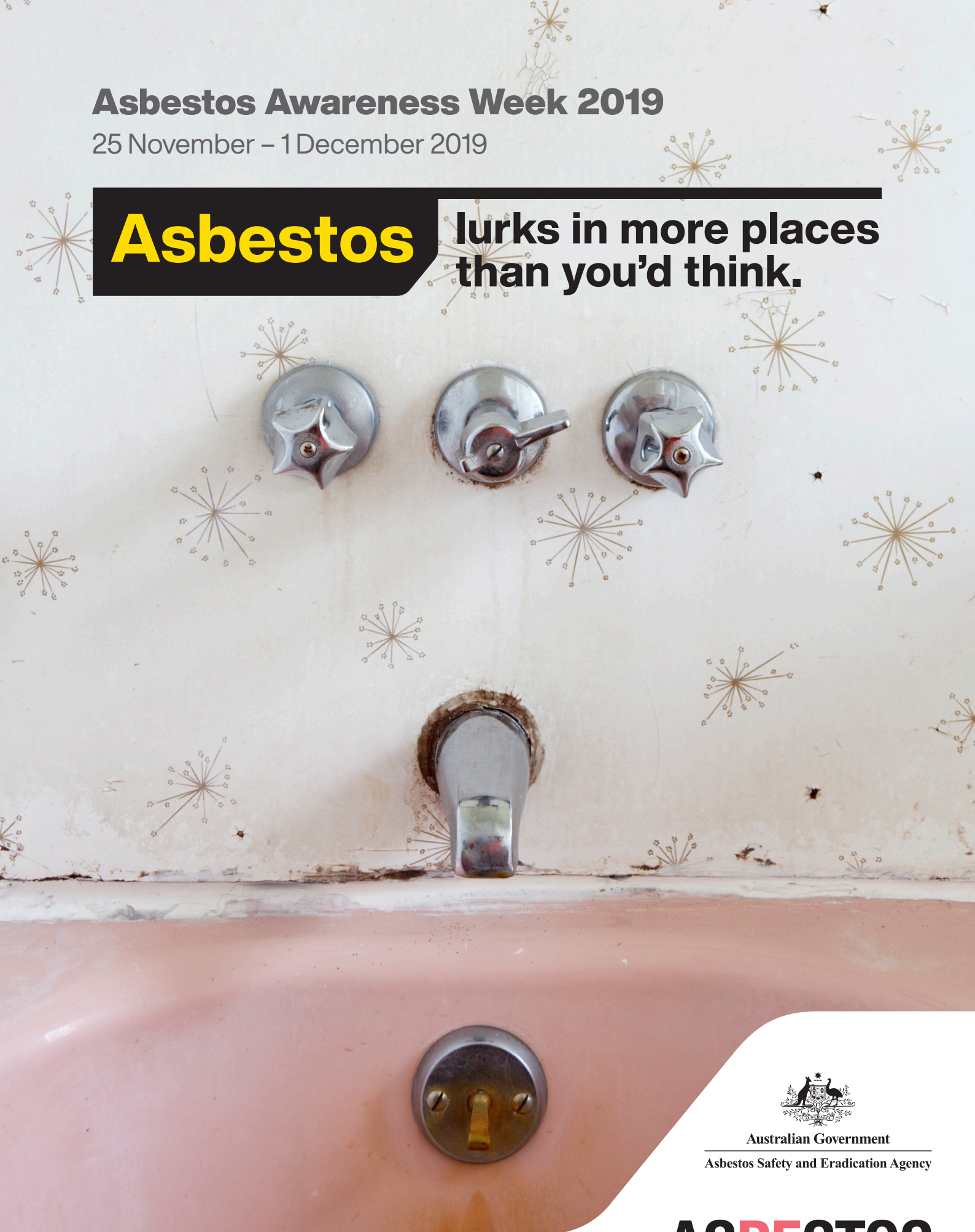


# Asbestos Awareness Week 2019

25 November – 1 December 2019

**Asbestos** lurks in more places  
than you'd think.



Australian Government

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

**Media Information  
and Resource Pack**

**ASBESTOS  
SAFETY**

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# Introduction

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**Despite its use being fully banned for 15 years, large amounts of asbestos are still present in many Australian homes, workplaces and the environment.**

**Around 4,000 people die annually from asbestos-related disease – double the annual road toll.**

Research is showing that while Australians know asbestos is “dangerous”, this knowledge does not translate into an awareness of:

- 1 where asbestos could be;
- 2 how they could potentially become exposed; or
- 3 how to stay safe to avoid fibre exposure

**The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency’s research shows that even amongst targeted trades (such as building trades, plumbing and electrical trades), awareness of where asbestos can be is often low.**

While knowledge of the potential of finding asbestos in areas such as residential roofs, insulation and walls is high, locations such as floors, bathrooms and kitchens can be low. In addition, knowledge of locations such as fuse boxes and pipes is minimal outside of trades occupations.

**In 2019 Asbestos Awareness Week, the umbrella slogan “Asbestos lurks in more places than you’d think” has been chosen in order to help educate the Australian population of the many possibilities where asbestos could potentially be located.**

The Agency are particularly concerned to spread the message of where asbestos is potentially located in homes – targeting home owners, renters and particularly renovators and DIY-ers.

This package provides media outlets with samples of the campaign collateral, factual information, and the opportunity to book speakers for media and news segments during or in the lead up to asbestos awareness week.

The hashtag is #asbestosawarenessweek and #asbestoslurks.

**Please get in touch with the Agency with any questions, requests for more information, or requests for comment or talent for Asbestos Awareness Week.**

**We have talent available for television, radio and interview.**

## **Tamsin Lloyd**

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# Fact Sheet

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- An estimated 4,000 Australians die annually from asbestos-related disease. This is double the annual road toll.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare said that at least 699 people died during 2018 from the aggressive cancer mesothelioma.
- Third-wave\* asbestos exposure is still on the rise. (See explanation of third-wave exposure below)
- In 2017 it was estimated that the third-wave currently represents one in every three new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed in Australia. This number is likely to rise.
- At least one in three homes built between 1940 and 1990 is believed to contain asbestos – in some parts of Australia this rises to as many as one in two homes.
- Asbestos was used in over 3,000 products prior to 1990 – a great many of these were in residential construction and fit out.
- Asbestos was completely banned in Australia in 2003.
- Over 6,000 tonnes of asbestos is illegally dumped per year.
- The World Health Organisation says there is no known safe minimum level of exposure.

*Note – it is important to know that asbestos is not harmful to health when it is bonded (such as with cement compounds), is in good (non-deteriorating) condition, and is not being touched or moved in any way.*

*Asbestos becomes dangerous once the fibres are disturbed and can then become airborne and inhaled. This is a risk during renovations that undertake work like removal, cutting, sanding, hammering, drilling, sawing, or demolition. It is also a risk in some workplace settings, due to both type of work (eg – construction) or location of work (eg – older buildings that may contain asbestos).*

## **Where might asbestos be found in the home?**

The following list is not exhaustive, but gives you an example of the many varied locations that asbestos was used in homes during different periods between the 1940s – 1980s.

- Fibro – for home construction (interior and exterior walls)
- Rooves, downpipes and insulation
- Kitchen splashbacks and tilux (waterproof walls found in kitchens, laundries and bathrooms)
- Under lino, tiles and carpet (asbestos was commonly used in the glue/underlay)
- Lagging (insulation/covering) around pipes, fuse box backing or as part of ventilation shafts
- Fences, garden sheds and sometimes small outdoor constructions like chicken coops
- Asbestos is often found in cement board sheeting that made up walls and eaves – disturbed when you sand for painting, drill holes, run cables, etc.
- Pads under sinks, debris in the subfloor, packers to brick piers and timber frames
- Fireplace door seals and in or around other appliances involving heat

## **\*What is the third wave of asbestos exposure?**

The third wave of exposure generally refers to exposure in the residential environment.

The third wave is largely associated with Do-It-Yourself (DIY) renovators undertaking repairs and improvements on homes without realising that they may be exposing themselves to asbestos in the process. The first wave comprised asbestos miners and manufacturers and the second wave comprised tradespeople using asbestos products.



# Key Questions & Answers

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Asbestos is an emotive issue for Australians, and many people become concerned when the issue is raised. Therefore, we have prepared the below “question and answer” sheet for media use. We also have experts available to discuss these issues.

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## How likely is it that a home has asbestos?

The simplest way of knowing if your home is a risk is the year it was built or renovated.

If your home was **built or renovated between the end of the Second World War and the late 1980s**, there is a MEDIUM chance your home has asbestos somewhere. If you have a fibro home (even if it is covered in cladding) then there is a HIGH chance that your home contains asbestos.

1 in 3 homes built during this period contains asbestos.

Homes **built prior to the second world war** have a moderate chance of asbestos, especially if they were renovated or extended at some point later on – this is very common, particularly for older homes where bathrooms or kitchen extensions were added.

If your home was built 1990 – 2003 there is a small chance your home contains asbestos.

If your home was built 2004 or later there is almost no chance your home contains asbestos.

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## My home has asbestos – what should I do?

If the asbestos containing materials in your home are in good condition, not likely to be disturbed, and the asbestos is held in place such as by cement or vinyl compounds there is a very low chance you are being exposed to harmful fibres. Asbestos is only dangerous to health once the fibres are released, so unless you have degrading walls or similar, the fibres will not be exposed.

That being said, asbestos does degrade over time, so if you are concerned you might like to consider having a trained professional remove and replace the asbestos at some point.

If there's a good chance that asbestos is present in your home, things to watch out for (and act on) include:

- Degrading or crumbling roof, eaves or down pipes
- Lino that is lifting or peeling, exposing the underneath bonding agent (which looks a bit like cement compound)
- A fence falling down or coming apart
- Any degrading or chipping of walls (particularly in bathrooms, laundries and kitchens)

If you live in an area that is prone to any kind of natural disaster that damages homes (fire, flood, cyclone, storm surge) we recommend considering replacing the asbestos in your home if you can – particularly exterior parts like walls and roofs.

It's very easy for these to become damaged during natural disasters and for fibres to be released – not only exposing home owners but emergency personnel and the general community.

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## Renovations – be aware, be prepared

If your home was built prior to 1990 and you're considering doing renovations (either using a professional or DIY) we strongly recommend engaging an asbestos assessor to give your house a proper check for asbestos prior to any work.

A residential asbestos survey (which may include taking laboratory samples to confirm if there is asbestos present) can cost from about \$500, depending on size and location of the suspected asbestos.

The money you spend is nothing compared to knowing you've protected yourself, your family and your community.

# Myth or Fact?

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**Below are common myths around asbestos in homes:**

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**MYTH:** A building report when you buy or sell a home will tell you if a home contains asbestos.

**FACT:** Building reports do not check for asbestos, and most building inspectors are not trained to assess for asbestos.

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**MYTH:** As a tenant, the real estate agent / home owner has to tell me if there's asbestos in the home.

**FACT:** While home owners have a duty of care to their tenants, most home owners are likely unaware if asbestos is present in the home so will not be able to inform tenants.

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**MYTH:** I have a brick home, with a slate roof – therefore there's no asbestos in my home.

**FACT:** Whilst a brick home and slate roof are unlikely to have asbestos in the exterior walls and roof, asbestos was commonly used in building materials throughout homes – including in the eaves, to pads under sinks, to fireplace door seals, under flooring, and in bathrooms, laundries and kitchens. Asbestos can also be present even in homes with all brick internal walls, such as to hot water pipes embedded in walls.

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**MYTH:** A tradesperson will know if I have asbestos in my house and how to deal with it.

**FACT:** Not necessarily.

Asbestos is not always easily identified and can only be confirmed by a laboratory test.

Although some tradespeople may know where asbestos may be present in your house, not all will know how to safely manage it. This is because it is not mandatory for all tradespersons to be provided with training to understand asbestos risks. You should ask a tradesperson about their training to ascertain their skill level.

If a tradesperson has completed asbestos training, they are not necessarily trained in large scale asbestos removal or be a licensed asbestos removalist. However, they may be trained in removing small amounts of non-friable asbestos and doing maintenance work around asbestos, as well as how to properly – and lawfully – dispose of asbestos.

We recommend getting a licenced removalist to handle, remove and dispose of asbestos.

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**MYTH:** I can remove and dispose of asbestos myself from my own home

**FACT:** It's complicated – the rules are not the same around the country

In the Australian Capital Territory it is illegal for a homeowner to remove any amount of asbestos containing materials (ACM).

In Queensland homeowners can only remove 10m<sup>2</sup> or less of non-friable ACM.

However due to the potential risks to human health it is highly recommended that a licenced asbestos removalist is engaged to remove and dispose of asbestos regardless of the amount.

This is because there are many safety precautions which should be undertaken (and safety equipment that needs to be used) to ensure everyone is safe from exposure.

At the end of the day, the cost of buying the safety equipment (which is disposed of after use), asbestos waste disposal bags and paying disposal fees of any materials ends up being similar to the cost of hiring a professional.

# Posters & Social Media

## Asbestos lurks in more places than you'd think.


ASEA's 4 core images for Awareness Week highlight areas around the home that can commonly contain asbestos – but that homeowners are less likely to be aware of.

The 'vintage' nature of the images are intended to remind people thinking of renovating their older rooms that asbestos has a good chance of being present, and that they should undertake a check (and removal) first.

As we are heading into the summer renovation season, we are hoping to remind the general public of the importance of checking, and of keeping themselves and their families safe.

**Tired of retro-chic?**

**Asbestos** lurks in more places than you'd think.



Asbestos was used in more than 3000 materials before it was banned – and it's still in millions of Australian homes. It hides in places you may not expect, like flooring, kitchens and bathrooms as well as roofs and walls. What's more, it's still found in many workplaces.

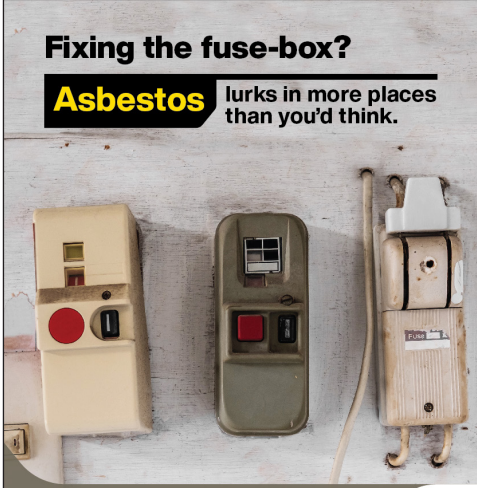
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**ASBESTOS SAFETY**

Know what to look for.  
Always take precautions.  
[www.asbestossafety.gov.au](http://www.asbestossafety.gov.au)

**Fixing the fuse-box?**

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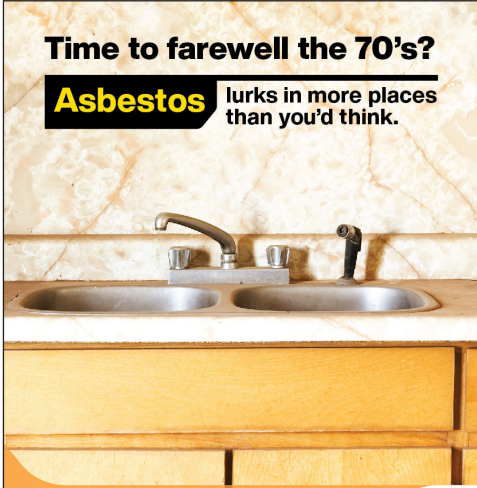
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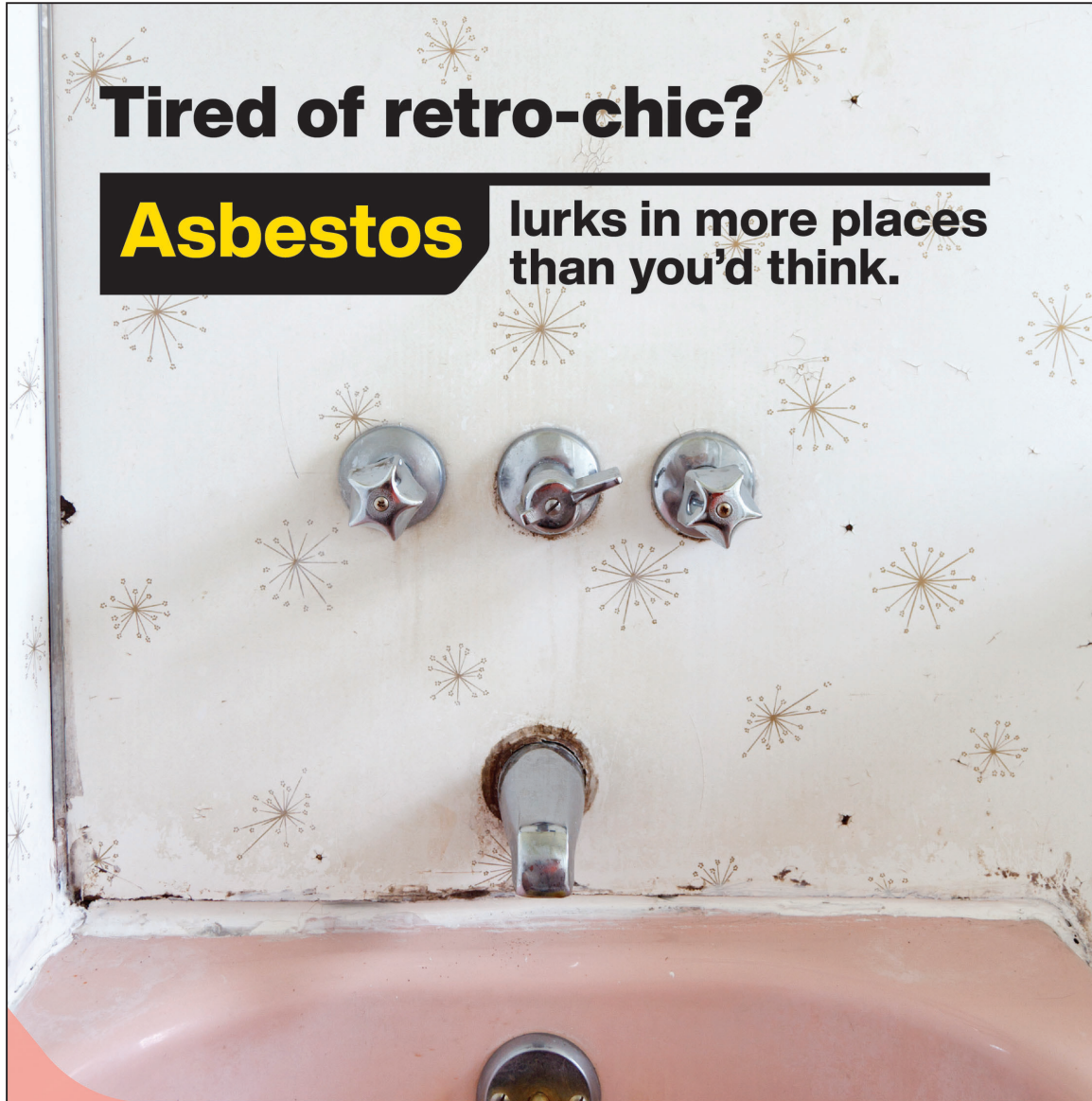
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## ASBESTOS SAFETY



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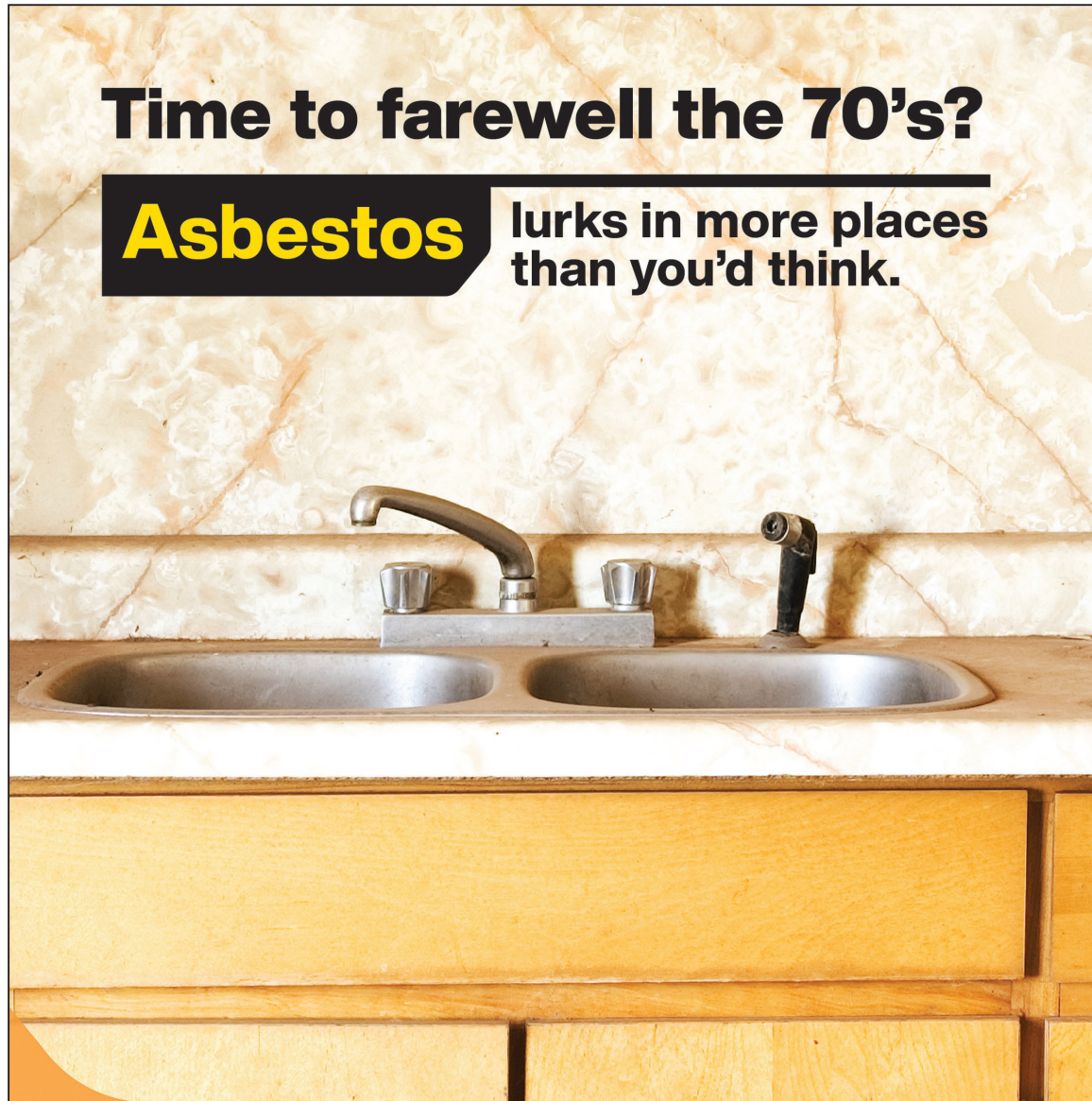
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