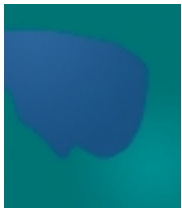




Mesothelioma Life Expectancy



Currently no cure for mesothelioma exists and the American Cancer Society explains that patients generally have a short average life expectancy of four to 18 months after diagnosis. Only 10% of mesothelioma patients survive more than five years after initial diagnosis. Since its recognition as a lethal form of cancer that develops after asbestos exposure, doctors and scientists have struggled to identify a [course of treatment](#) that can improve the prognosis for patients today.

Nevertheless, efforts today still generally focus on prolonging the overall quality of life and life expectancy of these patients instead of finding a cure. Among these treatments are [experimental](#) and [alternative therapies](#) meant to relieve symptoms and improve a patient's ability to lead a normal life.

Factors that Affect Life Expectancy

Malignant mesothelioma, like other cancers, is described in four stages. Early detection has proven significant in leading to prolonged life expectancy.

- **Stage I:** in its earliest stage, the cancer is localized, found only in the lining of the lung, the diaphragm or the lining of the sac that covers the heart on the same side of the chest. Patients lucky enough to have caught mesothelioma in this stage may be a good candidate for a biopsy to remove the tumors. In stage I, a full recovery is a possibility as detection so early is

an optimistic discovery.

- **Stage II:** this stage is considered advanced as the cancer has spread to areas outside the point of origin. Mesothelioma is found in the lining of the chest wall and the lymph nodes on the same side of the chest. Additionally, as in stage I, the cancer may also be found in other areas such as the lining of the lung, diaphragm or the sac that covers the heart on the same side of the chest. While surgery is still an option at this point, the projected life expectancy has decreased.

- **Stage III:** cases of stage III mesothelioma are commonly diagnosed after a patient has noticed symptoms. If stage III mesothelioma is the diagnosis, the cancer has spread to the chest wall, mediastinum, heart, lining of the peritoneum, and/or beyond the diaphragm. This is a grim discovery as this typically means the cancer has advanced to the other side of the chest, or outside the chest. Palliative (non-curative) surgeries may be considered at this point to ease the individual and make them feel more comfortable.

- **Stage IV:** the final stage of mesothelioma occurs when the cancer has spread to distant locations in the body. Stage IV may prove to be very painful for the patient, and palliative treatments are typically used to improve their comfort. However, life expectancy during this stage is drastically decreased.

Latency Period

Unlike other forms of cancer, symptoms of mesothelioma may not be seen for decades after initial exposure. This extended period of latency allows the cancer to develop and spread even before it is diagnosed. As a result of this late diagnosis, many patients can only receive palliative care to alleviate their pain, rather than fight the onset of the disease itself. When diagnosed in the later stages, mesothelioma does not respond to treatments as well and patients frequently do not possess the strength to undergo intensive surgery or therapies. This latency and subsequent pattern of treating symptoms rather than the disease itself gives mesothelioma an extremely poor life expectancy.

Patient Age

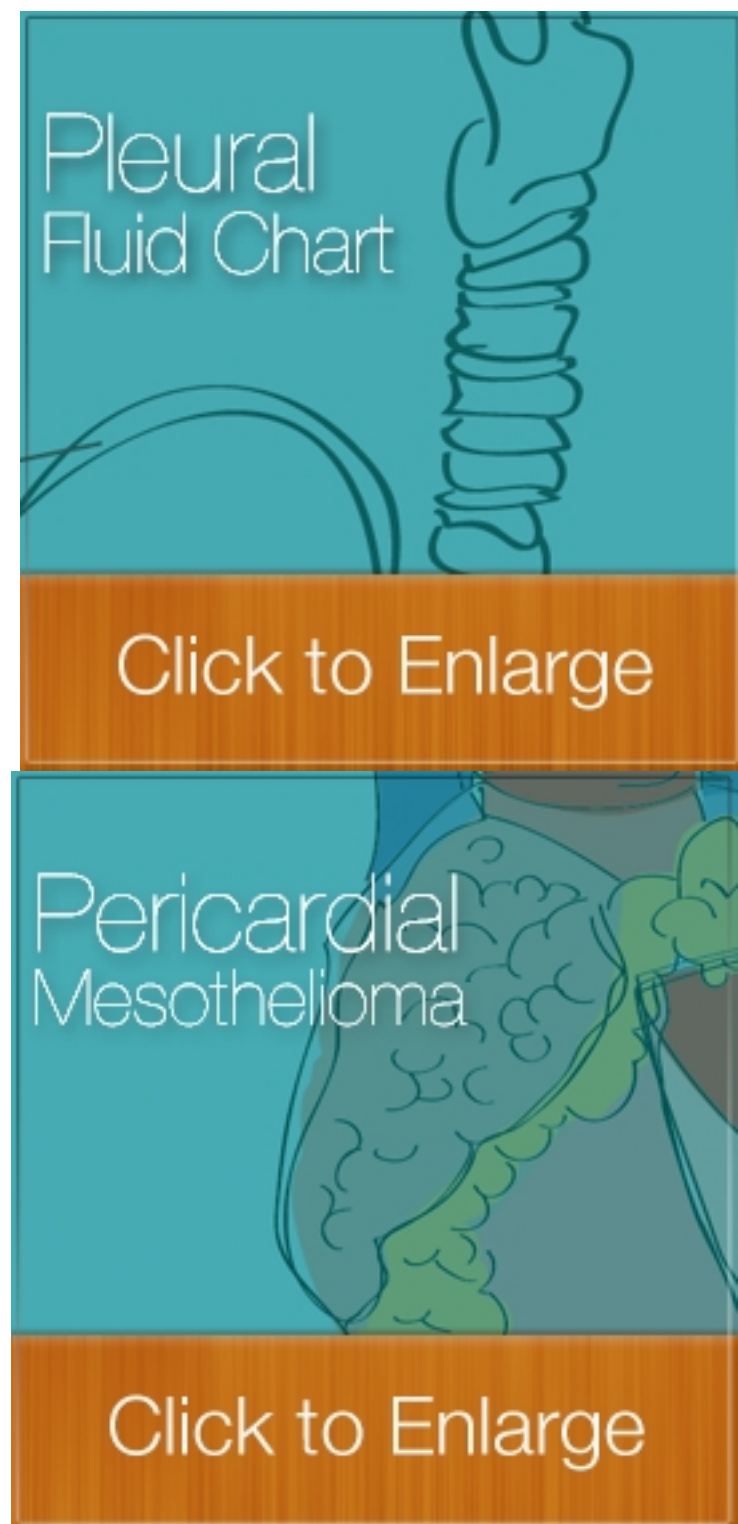
Statistics show that the average age of mesothelioma patients is 60, with the disease affecting men over the age of 55 in 75% of all cases. Because many older patients might suffer from other illnesses that can affect the healing process, the immune systems of these individuals might not be able to fight this condition as well. Furthermore, younger patients are typically able to undergo more aggressive treatments, whereas older patients, who generally develop mesothelioma, may not be able to handle the stress of serious treatments.

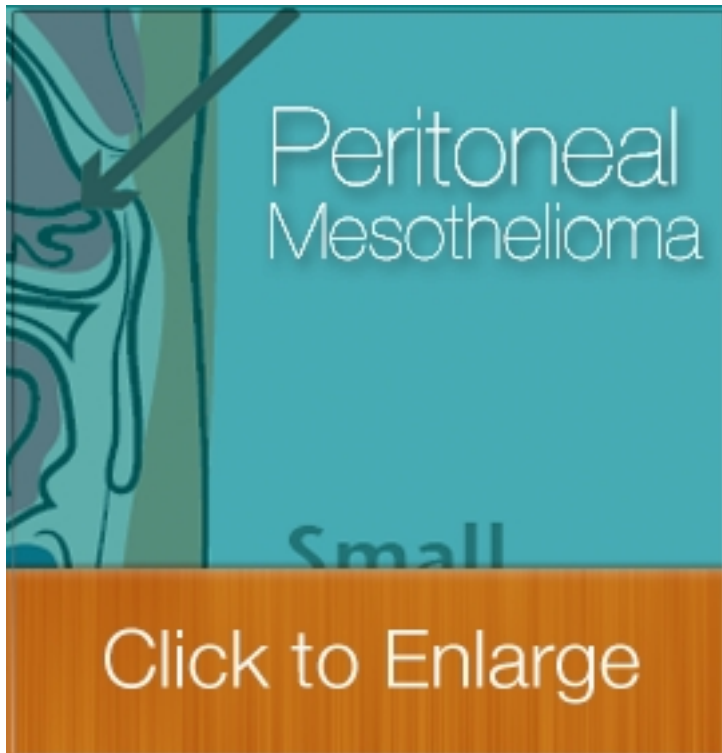
Gender

Since many cases of mesothelioma are connected to occupational asbestos exposure, males are the predominant gender affected by this cancer. While fewer females are affected, and

consequently less involved in clinical trials, for reasons unknown, women seem to have a better prognosis regarding life expectancy.

[Mesothelioma Type](#)





[Small image of Peritoneal Mesothelioma](#) [Click to Enlarge](#)

Histology

Malignant mesothelioma can be broken down into three histologic subtypes – epithelioid, sarcomatoid, and biphasic (mixed).

- **Epithelioid:** this variant is the most common form of the cancer comprising around 60% of all mesotheliomas. Being that it is the most common, and scientists have had more opportunities to study the variant, patients with epithelioid mesothelioma have a much more promising life expectancy compared to those with sarcomatoid or biphasic mesothelioma.
- **Sarcomatoid:** this subtype is comprised of malignant spindle cells that mimic malignant mesenchymal tumors. This is the least common, yet most aggressive form of mesothelioma and treatment options are limited.
- **Biphasic:** a mix of both Epithelioid and Sarcomatoid characteristics have been observed in this type of mesothelioma. Sadly, the average life expectancy for those diagnosed with biphasic mesothelioma is six months, the lowest of the three.

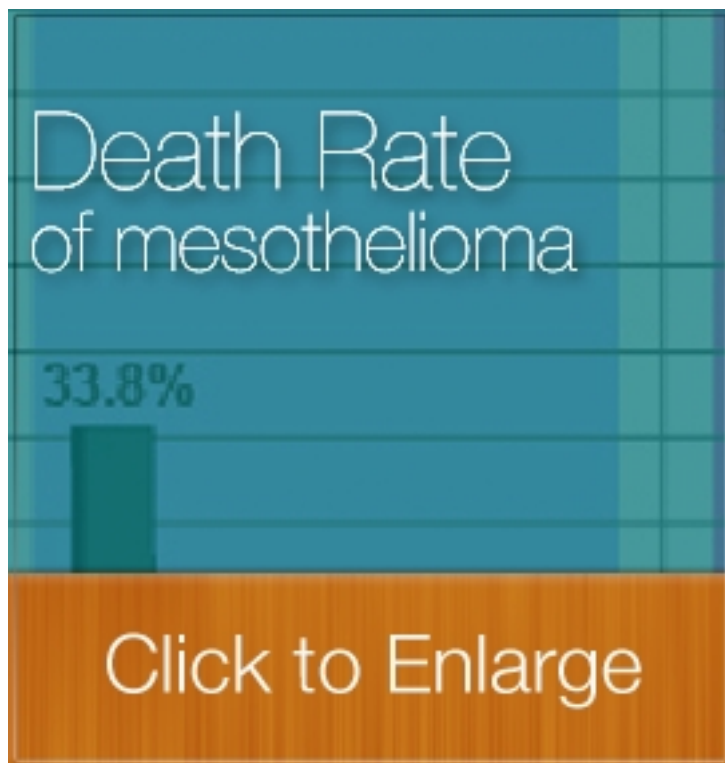
Smoking

Smoking remains one of the biggest contributors to a short life expectancy in mesothelioma patients. Although smoking does not directly cause mesothelioma, it can aggravate the condition and compromise a patient's overall health. Particularly for patients who suffer from pleural mesothelioma, smoking can greatly decrease life expectancy in even healthy individuals,

while also impacting their quality of life. As the only controllable aspect affecting the life expectancy of mesothelioma patients, the detrimental impact of this lifestyle choice deserves attention.

Prolonging Life Expectancy

Scientists and researchers are constantly studying and developing new ways to improve the quality of life and life expectancy in patients with all types of cancer, including mesothelioma. Clinical trials that test the efficacy of new drugs and treatment methods now occur frequently, giving patients hope. However, in the case of mesothelioma, the most important frontier will be in the field of [diagnosis](#) . As an asymptomatic disease, overcoming the latency period will go a long way into treating the disease and increasing a patient's life expectancy.



Despite these important factors, the life expectancy of mesothelioma sufferers can widely vary from patient to patient. While some patients may elect to undergo more high intensity treatments in order to kill off cancerous cells, limitations like age, health and cancer stage often make this impossible. [Surgery](#) , [chemotherapy](#) and [radiation](#) are some of the more common forms of treatment used today, although doctors hope to develop more advanced procedures to help in the treatment of this disease which carries such a poor life expectancy.

Other actions in the cancer battle may include getting a second opinion, undergoing [alternative](#)

[treatments](#)

, being a part of a clinical trial, improving nutrition, or taking immune system enhancers.

A second medical opinion is always a good idea as mesothelioma and its stages are commonly misdiagnosed. A patient may be told they are dealing with stage III mesothelioma by one doctor and seek a second opinion only to find they really have stage II cancer. This misdiagnosis can make a big difference as far as treatment options and life expectancy.

Alternative Therapies

While they are not medically recognized as cures for cancers, especially one as aggressive as mesothelioma, alternative treatments have been very popular among patients seeking help outside of traditional medicine. Numerous patients suffering from mesothelioma have benefitted from options such as acupuncture, meditation and holistic medicines, to name a few. While these therapies are symptom-reducing measures, not curative treatments, they have been receiving more attention lately as part of a multimodal approach to combating mesothelioma. With a sea of alternative therapies including [manual healing](#) options and those concerning the [mind, body and spirit](#) available, patients are sure to find a method that they are comfortable with and one that might just work for them.

[Clinical Trials](#)

Clinical trials are always recruiting volunteers, and researchers are constantly testing new medicines and treatment approaches with the hope of one day finding a cure for mesothelioma. These trials allow patients to take advantage of new treatments that may extend survival; however, they do not come without risk.

[Nutrition](#)

Nutrition has a large impact on health in general. More importantly, if an individual is diagnosed with mesothelioma, it is important to factor in a healthy balance of beneficial foods high in antioxidants, minerals and proteins. Eating at least five servings of fruits and veggies a day is recommended for those suffering from cancer. These foods are high in antioxidants and can boost the immune system making the body healthier and more able to fight diseases.

Immune system enhancers boost the immune system making the body stronger. Treatments such as immunotherapy rejuvenate the immune system by seeking to repair faulty aspects of the system that are not working up to par.

Other Life Expectancy Factors

While the above seem to be the main factors involved in predicting a patient's life expectancy, other factors have been linked to longer survival times. These factors include:

- The ability to carry out normal daily tasks
- Lack of chest pain
- No significant weight loss
- Normal levels of a substance in the blood called LDH
- Normal red and white blood cell counts and blood platelet counts

Patients suffering from mesothelioma are served a daunting sentence. They may be scared and anxious for what the future has to offer. While typical outcomes do follow a discouraging trail, all the new discoveries and medicines, along with scientists, doctors and researchers dedicated to finding a cure, make the future of mesothelioma diagnosis and treatment promising.

References:

[American Cancer Society](#)

[Clinical Trials](#)

[Cancer Diet.org](#)

[National Cancer Institute](#)

[SEER Cancer Incidence Rates](#)

Source: <http://www.mesotheliomasymptoms.com/mesothelioma-life-expectancy>