



## Differences between Glass Wool, Fibre Glass and Asbestos Insulation

Although glass wool, fibre glass and asbestos are all forms of insulation, they have some significant health and safety differences.

### Glass wool

Glass wool is thermal and acoustic insulation used around the world in homes, commercial and industrial buildings, vehicles and white goods.

Glass wool is made from sand and recycled glass (up to 80% in New Zealand). This blend is melted, spun into a fibrous mat and bound together by resin. The material's texture is similar to wool, hence the name 'glass wool'.

Pink® Batts® insulation is made only from glass wool, which is completely safe for humans. Even if you inhale glass wool fibres into your lungs during installation, most fibres dissolve inside your body and disappear quickly with no adverse health effects.

Glass wool is classified as non-carcinogenic - that is, it does not cause cancer in humans.

### Fibre glass

Fibre glass is a composite plastic reinforced by extremely fine glass fibres, making it very strong and flexible. It is often used to make yachts, canoes and light-weight vehicles.

These fibres are different to the type used in glass wool. Fibreglass fibres are not known to be cancer-producing but they are also not broken down inside the human body, unlike glass wool fibres.

### Asbestos

Asbestos was once widely used to make roofing shingles and to insulate walls and floors around wood-burning stoves. Although it is a good insulator, asbestos is now known to be carcinogenic and is no longer used.

Asbestos refers to a group of natural minerals that are made up of many small, very strong fibres.

### Health and safety comparisons

Properties	Materials		
	Glass wool	Fibre glass	Asbestos
Non-carcinogenic (not cancer-causing)	✓	✓	✗
Bio-soluble (your body dissolves & eliminates fibres)	✓	✗	✗

Pink® Batts® insulation is made from glass wool and has never been made from asbestos material. It is a safer product than fibre glass and asbestos.

## **Glass wool – good practice**

Glass wool fibres can be a source of temporary skin irritation. As a precaution, we recommend you wear long-sleeves and trousers, gloves and a facemask when installing insulation. You can also wash off any loose fibres on your skin with soap and cold water.

For more information please call 0800 PINK BATTs (746 522).

### **Sources**

International Agency for Research on Cancer; Code of Practice for Health and Safety in the Manufacture of Composites based on Synthetic Resins – Fibreglass; NZ Occupational Safety and Health Report Series No. 8: 2001.