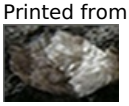
Exposure to the mineral erionite linked with increased risk of mesothelioma.

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Mesothelioma is a cancer of the lining of the body cavities. Although this rare disease is usually linked to exposure to asbestos, new research suggests that the mineral erionite may also pose a risk. Erionite originates in volcanic ash, but natural changes it undergoes on the Earth's surface cause it to become fibrous and rough, similar to asbestos. Several Turkish villages have increased incidence of mesothelioma, which has been linked to erionite.

Several erionite deposits exist in the United States, but these are not great risks if they go undisturbed. North Dakota, however, has over 300 miles of roads paved with erionite-containing gravel. Researchers are monitoring this area and advising that precautionary measures be implemented to reduce the risk of exposure.

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