

ASBESTUS, in *Chemistry*, formed of the priv. *α*, and *σβεννυμι*, to *extinguish*. *Asbest non mûr*, Fr. *Asbestus immaturus* of the old mineralogists. *Gemeiner asbest*, Germ. *Talcum asbestus vulgaris*, Werner. The most usual colour of asbestus is leek-green; sometimes mountain or olive-green, more rarely greenish or yellowish grey. It occurs in mass. Hexahedral prismatic crystals of asbestus are also mentioned as having been found at Griesbach near Passau, and rhomboidal prisms of the same at Gemundt in Carinthia, and at Bagnères; according, however, to Emmerling and Lenz, these are not crystals of asbestus, but of strahlstein. Internally it is shining, or little shining with a silky or waxy lustre. Its fracture is parallel fibrous, either straight or curved, sometimes also splintery. It generally flies, when broken, into long splintery fragments. It is translucent at the edges; is tender, passing into half-hard; is brittle, slightly elastic; somewhat unctuous to the touch. Sp. gr. according to Kirwan, 2.547

Asbestus does not effervesce with acids; before the blow-pipe it fuses without addition, but very difficultly, in a greyish black slag: at 160° of Wedgwood, it forms a grey porous porcelain, of sufficient hardness to give fire with steel.

The results of the analysis of this mineral are as yet but little satisfactory. Bergman analysed three specimens, from which it appears, that asbestus consists of 60...67 per cent. of silice, 13...16 carbonated magnesia, 6...12 carbonated lime, and a very variable proportion of alumine and iron. Weigleb, on the other hand, found in the asbestus of Zöblitz 48.45 magnesia, 46.66 silice, 4.79 iron. It is so lately, however, that the art of chemical analysis has been brought even to an approximation of certainty, and the causes of error are still so numerous, that with the exception of Klaproth, Vauquelin, Chenevix, and perhaps a few others, hardly any authority is to be attached to the various chemists who have been engaged in this very important but most difficult branch of mineralogical science.

Asbestus is found in serpentine rock, and, in general, in the same situations as amianthus. It is sometimes mixed with indurated talc and magnetic iron.

The more flexible varieties have been applied to the manufacture of incombustible cloth, in the same manner as AMIANTHUS; which see. Kirwan's Mineralog. vol. i. 159. Brochant. Mineralog. vol. i. 497. Widenmann. Handbuch der Mineral. p. 451. Lenz, Versuch, &c. v. i. p. 273.