

Radon Awareness Week

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can be found in both outdoor and indoor air. It is odorless, colorless, and tasteless, making it difficult to detect without the use of specialized equipment. Radon can also be released from certain building materials such as concrete and granite. Exposure to high levels of radon can cause serious health problems, including lung cancer. Therefore, it is important to understand the risks associated with radon exposure and take steps to reduce your risk of exposure in your home or workplace. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking, and it is estimated that it causes more than 20,000 deaths each year in the United States alone. Radon can enter your home through cracks in the foundation or walls and accumulate to dangerous levels if not properly addressed.

Factors that increase your risk of getting lung cancer from radon include the following:

- High radon levels in your home or another building that you regularly spend time in
- High radon levels in the part of the home or building where you spend the most time (Radon levels are often higher in basements and lower levels.)
- Smoking cigarettes, currently or in the past
- Burning wood, coal, or other substances that add particles to the air

The only way to know if you have unsafe levels of radon in your home or office is by testing. You can contact your state radon office for testing or purchase a test kit in a hardware store or online. If your test shows that radon levels are above 4pCi/L or you are interested in reducing radon in your home, contact your state radon office to help you find a qualified or state-certified radon contractor in your area to fix your home. Lowering high radon levels requires technical knowledge and special skills so you should rely only on a qualified professional for these repairs. Test radon levels again after any repairs to be sure they worked.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recommends these actions you can take to reduce your risks of lung cancer and help lower radon levels in your home:

- Increase airflow in your house by opening windows and using fans and vents to circulate air. However, natural ventilation in any type of house is only a temporary strategy to reduce radon.
- Seal cracks in floors and walls with plaster, caulk, or other materials designed for this purpose.
- You can cover the earth floor in crawl spaces with a high-density plastic sheet. A vent pipe and fan can be used to blow the radon from under the sheet and vent it to the outdoors

