

RADON FACT SHEET

Radon is a colorless, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas. Unless you test for it, there is no way of telling how much radon is in your home.

The longer your exposure to radon, the greater the risk. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, causing as many as 500 deaths in New Jersey every year. Lung cancer risk increases with higher concentrations of radon and longer exposure. Only smoking causes more cases of lung cancer, so if you smoke and are exposed to elevated radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Breathing radon does not cause any short term health effects such as shortness of breath, coughing, headaches, or fever.

Radon comes from the natural breakdown (radioactive decay) of uranium. As you breathe, the radon decay products can become trapped in your lungs. As these decay products break down further, they release small bursts of energy which can damage lung tissue and lead to lung cancer.



Although radon will rapidly disperse outdoors, it can become trapped inside a home. Radon can seep into a home through dirt floors, sump pumps, floor drains, joints and tiny cracks or pores in walls. It can also be released from well water as it is used within the household.

Testing is easy, and is the only way to determine the level of radon in a structure. Any home may have high levels of radon even if neighboring homes do not. Testing can be done with a do-it-yourself home test kits or through a professional testing firm. **Test kits are available from the West Windsor Health Department for \$30.00.** Whatever the radon level, the longer the period of exposure - the greater the risk. While low levels of radon (less than 4 pCi/l) probably require no follow up measures, low cost strategies for further reducing any radon level include:

- Stop smoking and do not allow smoking in your home.
- Spend less time in areas with higher concentrations of radon, such as the basement.
- Whenever practical, open all the windows and turn on fans to increase air flow into and through the house. This is especially important in the basement.
- If your home has a crawlspace, keep the vents on all sides of the house fully open all year.
- If high radon levels are found and the home has a private well, call the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at **(800) 426-4791** for information on testing your water.

Radon levels can vary greatly from season to season as well as from room to room. Higher concentrations may require follow-up ranging from repeated testing to immediate intervention. The screening measurement only indicates the *potential* for a radon problem.

For a list of qualified testing companies and/or mitigation contractors call your local Health Department at **(609) 936-8400** or the NJ State Radon Program at **(800) 648-0394** or www.state.nj.us/dep/rpp/radon.

TEST YOUR HOUSE FOR RADON. Your family will breathe a lot easier.

WEST WINDSOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Serving the communities of West Windsor ■ Hightstown ■ Robbinsville