

Radon Facts

WHAT IS RADON?

- Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive soil gas that is colorless, odorless and tasteless.
- Through decay, radon breaks down into hazardous particles which can be inhaled.
- Radon levels are measured by units of radioactivity per volume of air called picoCuries per liter (pCi/L).

WHERE IS RADON FOUND?

- Radon is found outside and indoors. Outdoor levels are typically below the EPA's recommended action level.
- Higher concentrations of radon are found in homes, schools, and office buildings, entering through cracks in the basement or foundation.

HOW IS RADON CONNECTED TO HEALTH?

- Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer, following cigarette smoking.¹
- Radon decays into sticky radioactive particles that get trapped in the lungs when inhaled. As they are broken down further, these particles release small bursts of energy that damage lung tissue over time.²
- If you smoke and your home has high levels of radon, the risk of getting lung cancer is especially high.²

WHY SHOULD I TEST MY HOME FOR RADON?

- Living in a home with a radon level of 4 pCi/L is like getting 200 chest x-rays per year.²
- Living in a home with a radon level of 20 pCi/L is like smoking two packs of cigarettes per day.²
- If you are around secondhand smoke and have high levels of radon, you are at risk of developing lung cancer.²

WHO PROVIDES RADON INFORMATION, TESTING, AND MITIGATION?

- Many local health departments have radon programs and provide free radon test kits.
- The Kentucky State Radon program offers free radon test kits if you are in a county that does not have a radon program.
- Radon test kits also can be purchased at local home improvement stores.
- Certified mitigators can test for radon and mitigate, or fix, a home with high levels of radon.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SECONDHAND SMOKE AND RADON?

- Radon attaches to secondhand smoke particles which are small enough to be breathed directly into the lungs.²
- Radon and secondhand smoke are the number two and number three causes of lung cancer.³

For more information, please contact:

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¹ Alberg AJ & Samet J. (2003). The epidemiology of lung cancer. *Chest*. 123,442-451.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, ABDR. (1990). *Toxicological profile for radon*. Atlanta, GA: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

³ U.S Department of Health and Human Services. Surgeon General releases national health advisory on radon. 2005; <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/pressreleases/sg01132005.html>. Accessed December 2, 2009.