

# RADON FACT SHEET

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. It is a colorless, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas. Unless you test for it, there is no way of telling how much is present in your home.

The longer your exposure to radon, the greater the risk. Each year, radon is believed to cause an estimated 21,000 deaths in the United States from lung cancer. 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 you 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. It is possible for your home to have detectable radon while your neighbor's home does not. Testing can be done with a do-it-yourself home test kit or through a professional testing firm. 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 radon level include:

- ✓ Stop smoking and discourage smoking in your home. You can reduce your family's overall chance of developing lung cancer, as well as reducing their risk from radon exposure.
- ✓ 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 beneath, 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 Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 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. Radon levels can be readily lowered for \$800 to \$2,500 (with an average cost of \$1,200). The screening measurement only indicates the *potential* for a radon problem.

For a list of "qualified" testing companies that can test and/or mitigation contractors call the West Windsor Health Department at 936-8400 or the NJ State Radon Program at 1-800-648-0394 or (609) 984-5425.

**THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO  
PROTECT YOUR FAMILY  
FROM RADON.**

**First, the hard way ...  
Hold your breath.**



**TEST YOUR HOUSE  
FOR RADON.**

**Your family will breathe  
a lot easier.**