



Radon



What is Radon?

Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas found naturally around the country. Radon is found in the dirt and rocks beneath houses, in well water, and in some building materials. It can enter your house through soil, dirt floors in crawlspaces, and cracks in foundations, floors, and walls. All houses have some radon, but houses next to each other can have very different radon levels, so the only way to determine your particular risk is to test your home.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon causes about 20,000 cases of lung cancer each year, making it the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. It is difficult to identify any immediate symptoms related to radon exposure; it may take years before health problems appear. When you breathe air containing radon, cells in your airway may be damaged, increasing your risk of getting lung cancer. **There is no "safe" level of radon exposure.** Testing is the only way to know if radon levels are high in your home.

Steps you can take to reduce radon levels include:

- Purchase a radon test kit at your local health department, hardware store, or order it by mail and test your home or office.
- Send the radon test kit to the appropriate laboratory to determine radon levels.
- You can also hire a professional tester to do the test for you. Contact your state's radon office for a list of qualified testers. (http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3312_4120_4196---,00.html)
- Fixing your home if radon levels are high.

Other helpful steps:

- Stop smoking and discourage smoking in your home. Smoking significantly increases the risk of lung cancer from radon.
- Increase air flow in your house by opening windows and using fans and vents to circulate air. 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. Contact your state radon office for

a list of qualified contractors in your area and for information on how to fix radon problems yourself. Always test again after finishing making sure you've fixed your radon problem.

- Ask about radon resistant construction techniques if you are buying a new home. It is usually cheaper and easier to build these features into new homes than to add them later.

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CDC Public Information

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