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## Feature Story

# RADON

January is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) designated Radon Action Month, and that's a good thing to know about. According to the EPA, "Radon is a radioactive gas. It comes from the natural decay of uranium that is found in nearly all soils. It typically moves up through the ground to the air above and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation. Your home traps radon inside, where it can build up. Any home may have a radon problem. This means new and old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements."

### **Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas**

You can't see radon. And you can't smell it or taste it. But it may be a problem in your home. Radon is estimated to cause many thousands of deaths each year. That's because when you breathe air containing radon, you can get lung cancer. In fact, the Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high. Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe.

## **Radon** *Continued from previous page*

Radon can be found all over the U.S. It can get into any type of building — homes, offices, and schools — and result in a high indoor radon level. But you and your family are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home, where you spend most of your time.

### **You should test for radon**

Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon. EPA and the Surgeon General recommend testing all homes below the third floor for radon. EPA also recommends testing in schools. Testing is inexpensive and easy — it should only take a few minutes of your time. Millions of Americans have already tested their homes for radon (see [How to Test Your Home](#)).

### **You can fix a radon problem**

Radon reduction systems work and they are not too costly. Some radon reduction systems can reduce radon levels in your home by up to 99%. Even very high levels can be reduced to acceptable levels.

### **New homes can be built with radon-resistant features**

Radon-resistant construction techniques can be effective in preventing radon entry. When installed properly and completely, these simple and inexpensive techniques can help reduce indoor radon levels in homes.

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In addition, installing them at the time of construction makes it easier and less expensive to reduce radon levels further if these passive techniques don't reduce radon levels to built radon-resistant. If radon levels are still **in excess of 4 pCi/L**, the passive system should be activated by having a qualified mitigator install a vent fan.

For more information, check out our previous articles about indoor radon in the January 2014 issue of Healthy Indoors Magazine at:

<http://hi.iaq.net/i/238907/19>

and visit the EPA's radon page at: <http://epa.gov/radon>

<https://vimeo.com/83623831> Video image not viewable in Zoom mode.

Consumer's Guide to Radon Reduction

How to fix your home Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

EPA 402/K-10/005 | September 2010 | [www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon)

WHO HANDBOOK ON INDOOR RADON A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

<http://hi.iaq.net/i/237600>

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## RADON MYTHS vs FACTS

**MYTH:** Scientists aren't sure radon really is a problem.

**FACT:** Although some scientists dispute the precise number of deaths due to radon, all the major health organizations (like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Lung Association and the American Medical Association) agree with estimates that radon causes thousands of preventable lung cancer deaths every year. This is especially true among smokers, since the risk to smokers is much greater than to non-smokers.

**MYTH:** Radon testing is difficult, time consuming and expensive.

**FACT:** Radon testing is easy. You can test your home yourself or hire a qualified radon test company. Either approach takes only a small amount of time and effort.

**MYTH:** Homes with radon problems can't be fixed.

**FACT:** There are simple solutions to radon problems in homes. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners have already fixed radon problems in their homes. Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs; check with one or more qualified mitigators. Call your state radon office for help in identifying qualified mitigation contractors.

**MYTH:** Radon affects only certain kinds of homes.

**FACT:** House construction can affect radon levels. However, radon can be a problem in homes of all types: old homes, new homes, drafty homes, insulated homes, homes with basements, homes without basements. Local geology, construction materials, and how the home was built are among the factors that can affect radon levels in homes.

**MYTH:** Radon is only a problem in certain parts of the country.

**FACT:** High radon levels have been found in every state. Radon problems do vary from area to area, but the only way to know your radon level is to test.

**MYTH:** A neighbor's test result is a good indication of whether your home has a problem.

**FACT:** It's not. Radon levels can vary greatly from home to home. The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to test it.