

Frequently Asked Questions about Radon

As a health care provider, you may need to answer immediate questions about radon. Here are some brief answers and resources to provide for your patients.

- 1. How does radon get into buildings?** Radon is a cancer-causing natural radioactive gas that occurs naturally from breakdown of uranium contained in underground bedrock and seeps into homes, office buildings, and schools through cracks and holes in the building material. Then, because radon is heavier than air, it stays in the building and people breathe it in.
- 2. How can radon make my family sick?** You cannot see, smell, or taste radon, but it is a cancer-causing natural radioactive gas in the air that we breathe. When people breathe air that contains radon, they are more likely to develop lung cancer. In fact, for people who do not smoke, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer. It is responsible for about 20,000 deaths from lung cancer every year.
- 3. What can I do to protect my family from radon?** Have your home, school, child care center and office tested using the coupon in this packet or find a place that has radon test kits by calling 1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236). You can also find out more about testing by looking at the National Safety Council's website <http://www.nsc.org/issues/radon/> and the American Lung Association's website <http://www.lungusa.org>. Finally, keep your ears open about news from your state or local health departments, because they may be giving out free do-it-yourself test kits from time to time.
- 4. I tested my home and have a radon problem, now what?** You should look for a qualified contractor to fix the radon problem. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a great guide to hiring a contractor at <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/consguid.html>. If you don't have access to a computer, you can call your state or local health department and ask for the state radon office.
- 5. If radon is so dangerous, why haven't I heard of it before?** Just like it took a long time for everyone to learn about the dangers of smoking cigarettes, it will take a while to spread the word about radon. We do not know everything about this health risk, but all major health organizations confirm it causes cancer.
- 6. Can I reduce my family's exposure to radon before our home is fixed?** It is important to fix your radon problem as soon as possible. You can decrease the amount of radon you breathe a little bit by spending less time indoors and particularly trying to spend less time on the ground level of the building if possible. Play with your children outside when the weather is nice!

Resources

National Safety Council <http://www.nsc.org/issues/radon/>: This site provides information about testing for radon in homes, offices, schools and other buildings.

American Lung Association <http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK9OoE&b=35395>: Under the Air Quality section of the website, there is a lot of information about radon and ways to prevent it.

Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/consguid.html>: This site will guide you through picking out a contractor and starting to protect your home.

National Radon Information Line 1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236): Call this number to learn more about ways to test and protect yourself from radon.

En Español National Hispanic Indoor Air Quality Hotline 1-800-SALUD-2 (1-800-725-8312): This agency will provide people with radon-related information in Spanish. They also distribute kits with bilingual instructions.