

## It's Time to Test Your Home for Radon Gas

Radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. Radon is a naturally occurring gas found in the ground throughout the world. Most homes that are in contact with the ground will contain some amount of radon gas. Radon becomes more of a concern when it reaches high levels. Radon levels vary across the country. According to Health Canada about seven per cent of the Canadian homes have radon levels that may be putting residents at risk. Here in the B.C. Interior we have some "hot spot" areas with high radon levels in approximately 40 per cent of homes.

Being heavier than air, radon accumulates in low lying areas like basements. Many houses contain recreation rooms or suites in the basement that are occupied for many hours per day. Radon in combination with tobacco smoke, including second-hand smoke can increase the risk substantially. Health Canada estimates that one in three smokers exposed to high radon levels will develop lung cancer.

Radon gas is colourless, odourless and tasteless, so the only way to know if the radon levels in your home are high is to conduct testing. The best time to test your home for radon gas is now through April. During the cooler months windows and doors are often closed and rising warm air in a home draws more radon from the ground.

Testing a home is easy and inexpensive. Testing involves placing a small puck-like kit within the lowest area of the home that could be occupied for more than four hours per day. The kit should remain in that location for a minimum of three months and then mailed to a laboratory for results.

Just because your neighbours tested their homes and found low results does not mean your home is low too. The test results for your home can be very different. This is because factors beyond the local geology influence the levels within a building. Essentially, radon takes the path of least resistance, and resistance can vary between homes. Radon can enter a home through the foundation, including concrete, and more so through cracks in a foundation or dirt floor such as older crawl spaces. It can also enter a home through the ventilation system.

The bottom line is that everyone should test their homes for radon to see if this gas (dubbed as the "silent killer") is lurking. If elevated radon levels are found, basic measures can be taken to address the problem. Further information on radon can be found on the Health Canada website <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/radon-eng.php>

Test kits are available from BC Lung Association. Give them a call at 1-800-665-LUNG (5864).

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