

Safe at Home: Preventing Lung Cancer

BY REDUCING RADON IN THE HOME

What is radon? Radon is a gas that you cannot see, smell or taste. It comes from the decay of radioactive elements (such as uranium, thorium and radium) in soil and groundwater.

What are your chances for getting lung cancer from radon? Each one of the following influences your risk:

1. Level of radon in your home;
2. The amount of time you spend in your home;
3. If you are a smoker of tobacco or have ever smoked tobacco; and
4. If you are exposed to secondhand smoke.

How does radon get into a home? Radon can rise from the rocks in the ground, through the soil, and to the air above. It comes into your home through cracks and holes in the foundation. The radon becomes trapped in your home. This can happen in new and old homes, homes with or without basements, and in high-rise and multi-family buildings. Underground well water can transport radon from the soil into the house.

Why should I be concerned about radon?

Breathing in radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. Radon is the likely cause of more than 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S. In 2015, lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths in Georgia.

How does radon cause lung cancer?

Radon gas decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe. These particles break down and release small bursts of energy. This can damage lung tissue and lead to lung cancer over the course of your lifetime. Not everyone exposed to high levels of radon will develop lung cancer, however the risk for lung cancer is increased.

Where is radon found?

Nearly one out of every 15 homes in the U.S. is likely to have a high level of radon. Homes in all counties of Georgia have tested at high levels for radon. The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to test it. *(continued)*

