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## **Health Department: Protect Yourself and Your Family from Radon — Get a Free Test Kit**

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**Categories :** [Healthy Living](#)

**Tagged as :** [Darien Health Department 2020](#), [Radon](#), [Radon 2020](#), [Radon Test Kits 2020](#)

**Date :** January 15, 2020

People who don't smoke can still get lung cancer, and breathing indoor air with elevated levels of radon is one of the biggest causes for non-smokers.

High levels of radon get in some homes and not others, and the way to find out is by using a test kit. Lucky for you, Darien Health Department has them and is giving away a limited supply free test kits. Winter is the best time to test — so get your kit soon.

— *This article is based on an announcement from Darien Health Department, along with information [from the American Lung Association](#).*

**What Radon Is**

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Radon is an invisible, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas which is formed from the radioactive decay of radium and uranium that occurs naturally in bedrock worldwide. Radon is measured in units of radioactivity in both air and water as “picocuries per liter” (pC/L).

Higher concentrations are possible near certain types of bedrock (granite, shale) that have higher uranium content. Test data suggest that such higher concentrations occur sporadically in all parts of the state.

Radon is drawn into the home through cracks and other openings (such as sump pits) in the foundation.

*"About 1 out of every 15 homes in the United States have a level of radon that is too high."*

— HealthFinder.gov [Web page](#)

The Surgeon General has warned that exposure to elevated radon levels in indoor air is a leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

The American Lung Association says that it's the second-biggest cause of lung cancer (the first is smoking), and that "People who have never smoked make up approximately 2,900 of the estimated 21,000 radon-related lung cancer deaths each year."

While exposure to radon doesn't cause any immediate noticeable symptoms, long term exposure to high levels is thought to increase a person's risk with any adverse effects taking up to 30 years to develop.

### **What to Do and How to Do It**

Because radon does not have an odor, you can't know if you're is exposed. Therefore, all homes should be tested and action should be taken to reduce high levels if they exist.

Testing should be done in the winter because radon levels are commonly much higher in winter months.

"Radon testing is easy and inexpensive and it could save your life," according to the American Lung Association. "Thousands of lung cancer deaths could be avoided each year if home and building owners acted to test and fix."

Free test kits are now available at Darien Health Department, Darien Town Hall, weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Instructions and fact sheets accompany the kits which are provided with an accompanying postage-free mail-in envelope.

We encourage all residents to test your homes now. It's free — it's easy — and it's the right thing to do, for your family, and for you!

### **Learn More**

- [5 Myths about Radon and Lung Cancer](#) — Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (Nov. 11, 2019)
- [Radon and Cancer](#) — National Cancer Institute
- [Health Risk of Radon](#) — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency