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Six Facts About Radon, the Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in Nonsmokers

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You don’t have to smoke or be exposed to second-hand smoke to get lung cancer. According to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.epa.gov/), radon is responsible for an estimated [20,000 lung cancer deaths](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.epa.gov/radon/) a year.

[One in four homes](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/public-health-fact-sheet-on-radon.html#6) in Massachusetts has the potential to exceed the EPA’s recommended radon level of 4 [picocuries](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.epa.gov/radon/glossary.html) (the most popular method of measuring radon levels) per liter of air. The [Department of Public Health (DPH)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/public-health-fact-sheet-on-radon.html) and the [Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/) urge all Massachusetts residents to have their homes tested for radon, not just when they’re buying or selling a property.

Fortunately, there are a number of ways to reduce radon in your home. And while radon is dangerous at high levels indoors, [radon](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/public-health-fact-sheet-on-radon.html#1) levels outdoors are generally too low to be a concern.

Here are some [facts about radon](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/public-health-fact-sheet-on-radon.html) to keep in mind:

1. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas.
2. [Byproducts of radon decay](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/public-health-fact-sheet-on-radon.html#1) attach to surfaces and air particles, such as dust, and once inhaled, can pose severe [health risks](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.epa.gov/radon/healthrisks.html).
3. Radon is not only the leading cause of [lung cancer](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.epa.gov/radon/healthrisks.html#Iowa%20Study) among nonsmokers, but the second leading cause of lung cancer in smokers in the United States as well, as reported by the EPA.
4. One [out of 15 homes](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/pregnancy/getting-ready-for-your-baby/test-your-home-for-radon-quick-tips) in the United States has a radon level that needs to be reduced, according to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.hhs.gov/).
5. You can reduce your exposure to radon by increasing ventilation in your home.
6. The only way to know if your home has dangerous levels of radon is to test for it. Contact the [Radon Unit at the Department of Public Health’s Radiation Control Program (RCP)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/radon-unit.html) to learn how to test your home.

January is National Radon Action Month, a great time to take steps to keep your family safe from radon. If you want more information about radon, contact the [Radon Unit at the DPH’s Radiation Control Program (RCP)](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/radiation/radon/radon-unit.html) or the radon [helpline](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/http:/www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/newsroom/dph/directory/helplines.html).

**If you have any questions or concerns, comment below or tweet us**[**@MassGov**](https://wayback.archive-it.org/1358/20150122205003/https:/twitter.com/MassGov)**.**

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