

# Public Health Madison & Dane County: Radon: A risk for lung cancer

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Radon can't be seen, smelled, or tasted and is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Many people in Dane, Rock, and Green counties test their homes for radon and find elevated levels. The South Central Radon Information Center, representing Dane, Rock, and Green counties, urges everyone to test their home for radon.

"Testing your home for radon is really important, is easy to do, and it's cheap," says Clint Marshall of the South Central Radon Information Center. "You can buy a test kit at your local hardware store for around \$25, or you can [buy one from the South Central Radon Information Center for \\$10](#)," continues Marshall.

"Radon testing needs to be done with the windows closed, so winter is a great time to test," says Marshall.

Common throughout Wisconsin, radon is a naturally occurring gas. It comes from the ground and seeps into homes through tiny cracks in basement floors. Over time, exposure to radon in a home can cause lung cancer. Smoking in a home with high radon levels raises the risk of lung cancer by ten times.

"The only way to know if you've got high radon levels in your home is to test for it," says John Hausbeck, Environmental Health Supervisor for Public Health Madison & Dane County, the administrator of the South Central Radon Information Center. "Just open the kit and put it in a room in the lowest level of your house that you spend at least 7 hours a week in. After two to four days, send it to the lab to be tested," continues Hausbeck. Lab results are usually available about two to three weeks later.

“Don’t make the mistake of counting on a neighbor’s low radon level” says Hausbeck. “Levels can fluctuate from place to place and over time. You should repeat the radon test after any air sealing work, heating/air conditioning system changes, or foundation modifications are made,” continues Hausbeck.

If test results show that there is a concerning level of radon, a [certified radon mitigation contractor](#) should install a system that prevents radon from getting into the house. The cost of a radon mitigation system can vary, but typically runs around \$1,200.

Radon can be an issue for established homes and for newly constructed homes as well. “For people who are building new homes, it’s cheaper to install [radon control options](#) during construction than to install a system once the home is built,” advises Hausbeck.

To purchase a test kit or to speak with a Public Health Radon Specialist, call the South Central Wisconsin Radon Information Center at (608) 243-0392.

For more information regarding radon, including a list of qualified radon remediation contractors, visit the Wisconsin Radon Information website at:

[www.lowradon.org](http://www.lowradon.org).

[Wisconsin Interactive Map](#) of Radon test results to see where radon levels are the highest

[Radon 101](#) YouTube video from WI Department of Health Services