

Radon Myths

THE MYTH: Scientists are not sure that radon really is a problem.

THE FACTS: Although some scientists dispute the precise number of deaths due to radon, all the major health organizations (like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Lung Association and the American Medical Association) agree with estimates that radon causes thousands of preventable lung cancer deaths every year. This is especially true among smokers, since the risk to smokers is much greater than to non-smokers.

THE MYTH: Radon testing is difficult, time-consuming and expensive.

THE FACTS: Radon testing is easy. You can test your home yourself or hire a qualified radon test company. Either approach takes only a small amount of time and effort.

THE MYTH: Radon testing devices are not reliable and are difficult to find.

THE FACTS: Reliable testing devices are available from qualified radon testers and companies. Reliable testing devices are also available by phone or mail order, and can be purchased in hardware stores and other retail outlets. Call your state radon office for help in identifying radon-testing companies.

THE MYTH: Homes with radon problems can't be fixed.

THE FACTS: There are simple solutions to radon problems in homes. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners have already fixed radon problems in their homes. Radon levels can be readily lowered for \$800 to \$2,500 (with an average cost of \$1,200). Call your state radon office for help in identifying qualified mitigation contractors.

THE MYTH: Radon affects only certain kinds of homes.

THE FACTS: House construction can affect radon levels. However, radon can be a problem in homes of all types: old homes, new homes, drafty homes, insulated homes, homes with basements, and homes without basements. Local geology, construction materials, and how the home was built are among the factors that can affect radon levels in homes.

THE MYTH: Radon is only a problem in certain parts of the country.

THE FACTS: High radon levels have been found in every state. Radon problems do vary from area to area, but the only way to know your radon level is to test.

THE MYTH: A neighbor's test result is a good indication of whether your home has a problem.

THE FACTS: It's not. Radon levels can vary greatly from home to home. The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to test it.

THE MYTH: Everyone should test their water for radon.

THE FACTS: Although radon gets into some homes through water, it is important to first test the air in the home for radon. If your water comes from a public water supply that uses ground water, call your water supplier. If high radon levels are found and the home has a private well, call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1 800-426-4791 for information on testing your water.

THE MYTH: It's difficult to sell homes where radon problems have been discovered.

THE FACTS: Where radon problems have been fixed, home sales have not been blocked or frustrated. The added protection is some times a good selling point.

THE MYTH: I've lived in my home for so long—it doesn't make sense to take action now.

THE FACTS: You will reduce your risk of lung cancer when you reduce radon levels, even if you've lived with a radon problem for a long time.

THE MYTH: Short-term tests can't be used for making a decision about whether to fix your home.

THE FACTS: A short-term test, followed by a second short-term test* can be used to decide whether to fix your home. However, the closer the average of your two short-term tests is to 4 pCi/L, the less certain you can be about whether your year-round average is above or below that level. Keep in mind that radon levels below 4 pCi/L still pose some risk. Radon levels can be reduced in most homes to 2 pCi/L or below.