

RADON: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is radon?

Radon is a colorless, odorless radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of naturally occurring uranium in rock and soil. Radon can enter into homes through foundation cracks or other openings, and the trapped radon can then build up. As radon decays, it emits products that can damage lung tissue. Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among people who do not smoke. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer can increase even more.

2. Who should test?

Any home may have a radon problem - homes new or old, with or without basements, well-sealed or drafty. The only way to know about your home is to test. The EPA recommends testing all homes below the third floor.

If you live in an apartment, ask your landlord or property manager to test for radon. If your home has already been tested, ask for a copy of the results. If testing shows high radon levels, you should inform the building owner in writing. They should take steps to fix the problem for you and other residents.



3. When should I test?

- Home has not yet been tested
- Moving into a newly built home, even if it is built radon resistant
- When buying/selling a home
- Before and after home renovation, especially after radon mitigation
- Living pattern change (begin occupying a lower level such as the basement)

4. How do I get a test?

You can test for radon yourself or hire a NJ certified radon measurement company to perform the testing. Make sure you use a test from a qualified lab.

- To find a NJ certified radon measurement company, visit tinyurl.com/NJ-Radon-Biz
- To test for radon yourself, you can find radon test kits from radon measurement companies, hardware stores (make sure the kit is labeled with the NJ certification number "MEB9" followed by 4 digits), National Radon Program Services (order online at sosradon.org/test-kits or by phone 1-800-767-7236), or contact New Jersey Radon Hotline (1-800-648-0394). You can also check if your health department has radon tests available.



5. What kind of test should I get?

Radon tests can be either short- or long-term. Short-term tests take 2 to 90 days.

Examples are activated charcoal canisters and continuous radon monitors.

Long-term tests take more than 90 days. Examples are alpha track detectors or electrets.

The quickest way to test for radon is with a short-term test, but because radon levels tend to vary from day to day and season to season, a long-term test is more likely to determine your home's year-round average radon level.



West Windsor Township Health Department
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Sources: EPA,
NJ.GOV

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6. How do I use the test?

Follow the instructions that come with your radon test. The test should be placed in the lowest livable level of the home (lowest used living space such as a basement or ground floor). Do not place in kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, or closets.

Radon is measured in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). The U.S. Surgeon General and EPA recommend fixing homes with radon levels at or above 4 pCi/L. EPA also recommends that people consider fixing their homes for radon levels between 2 pCi/L and 4 pCi/L.



7. Does water have radon? Can I test my water for radon?

Yes, radon gas can dissolve and accumulate in ground water (ex. wells). Radon can then be released from water into air while showering, washing dishes, or other household tasks. Radon in water is not usually a problem when its source is surface water (ex. river, lake, reservoir).

In most cases, radon entering the home through water will be a small source of risk compared with radon from soil. The EPA recommends that you first test your home's air for radon. If you find a radon problem and if your water comes from a well, test your water for radon. You can call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791) for information on laboratories that can test your water. If concerned about your public water supply, you can contact your water supplier.



8. Can I fix my home's elevated radon myself?

Radon mitigation is any process or system used to reduce radon concentrations in buildings. It is recommended to hire a New Jersey certified radon mitigation company to address elevated radon in your home (visit tinyurl.com/NJ-Radon-Biz). These are experts educated to follow standards for safe mitigation. After mitigation, make sure a post-mitigation test is performed and ask how the mitigation system should be maintained.

Some newly constructed buildings and homes include Radon Resistant New Construction. These buildings should still be tested, but they are built with components to help reduce radon exposure.

9. How much does radon mitigation cost? Are there cost assistance programs?

Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs. A common radon mitigation system ranges from about \$750 to \$3,500. Costs vary depending on how the home was constructed and the extent of the radon problem.

Some federal programs help fund radon mitigation. These programs generally give money to local agencies or groups, but there are some programs to which individual homeowners can apply.

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development "203k" program – Funds rehabilitation and repair of single family homes. For more information, call 202-708-2121.
- USDA Rural Development Single Family Housing Direct Programs – Loans or grants for low-income homeowners to repair their homes. For more information, call their NJ office at 856-787-7700.

To check program eligibility, visit tinyurl.com/Radon-Direct-Programs.



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