

# Don't mess with radon, order free test kit now

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Often times we hear the term “living green” and we think of recycling, carpooling or reducing our carbon footprint. However “living green” is also the theme for breathing, healthy clean air. One way to do this is to have your home checked for radon gas, especially during the winter months when doors and windows are closed and air from outside is not circulating inside.

Radon is an odorless, tasteless, invisible gas produced by the decay of naturally occurring uranium in soil and water. Knox County has lots of it. It's harmless when floating freely outside, but dangerous when trapped in your home.

Most people don't take radon seriously because its effects are not felt immediately, as with carbon monoxide or natural gas. Fortunately or unfortunately, radon takes a while to cause harm, but when it does, it can be deadly. Radon is a form of ionizing radiation and can cause cancer. It is estimated to cause about 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Your chances of getting lung cancer from radon depend on: how much radon is

in your home; the amount of time you spend in your home; and whether you are a smoker or have ever smoked.



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Knox County ranks #2 in the state for high levels of radon. Older and newer homes alike can have radon. The radon gas can enter our homes through the ground, seeping in through small cracks or holes in our foundation. Radon can also enter through the water supply.

Any Knox County resident can test for radon with a free test kit. Simply fill out a form online at the health department's website, [knoxhealth.com](http://knoxhealth.com) (search for radon) or complete a form at the health department and we'll order one for you.

You should receive a kit in about a week with instruction to install the kit at the lowest level of your home where you spend a lot of time such as the

basement family room or a first-floor bedroom. When the allotted test time has been completed, mail your kit to the test lab. Your radon level will be reported in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). The EPA recommends you fix your home if the radon level is 4 pCi/L or higher.

If you have a radon level of a 4 pCi/L or higher it is recommended to have a mitigation system installed by a licensed mitigation installer. The cost and design may vary with each installer. The health department can help you locate a licensed installer.

If you have a high reading, don't wait to mitigate especially if you have children in the home. A child's lungs can be damaged much quicker than an adult's. If you are a smoker, your risk is doubled for developing lung cancer.

ABC News once called radon a “silent killer” because we can't see, hear, touch, taste or smell it. But we can learn about radon and prevent it from hurting us and our families. Education and prevention, this is public health.