

Special Points of Interest:

- Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer resulting in more than 20,000 deaths each year.
- Millions of homes have elevated radon levels and should be tested regularly to reduce the risk of lung cancer.
- When people who smoke are exposed to radon, the risk of lung cancer is significantly higher.

Radiation and Radon

In a National Health Advisory issued on January 13, 2005, U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona warned the American public about the risks of breathing indoor radon. "Indoor radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and breathing it over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country," Dr. Carmona said. "It's important to know that this threat is completely preventable. Radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through well-established venting techniques."¹

This fact sheet directs your attention to one type of very dangerous radiation—radon, the source of 55 % of radiation exposure nationwide and the second leading cause of lung cancer in the US.

What Is Radon and Why Is It Dangerous?

Radon is naturally occurring radioactive gas produced during the normal decay of uranium found in the earth's crust. To study the effects of radon, scientists have depended on data collected on underground miners. However, miners are not the only people exposed to radon. Radon is a colorless, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas that occurs naturally in most rocks and soil and is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air. However, when radon is trapped in buildings, especially at elevated levels, it can increase the risk of lung cancer.² Radon enters homes from the ground below, so Alabamians are being warned to test their homes for radon.

**Lung cancer
from radon can
be prevented.**

High Risk Counties in Alabama

Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Morgan, Jackson, Jefferson, Shelby, Coosa, Talladega, Clay, Calhoun and Cleburne counties have been designated as having a high potential for indoor radon problems in Alabama.

Earn CME, CNE or CEU Credit

Case Studies in Environmental Medicine: Radon Toxicity. Available online at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HEC/CSEM/csem.html>

¹Surgeon General Releases National Health Advisory On Radon. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/pressreleases/sq01132005.html>. Found 1/4/2006.

²Radon in Alabama. Alabama Cooperative Extension System. <http://www.aces.edu/crd/radon> Found 1/4/2006.

About the ACCCC:

The Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition (ACCCC) is a diverse group of partners and organizations from across the state who are dedicated to reducing cancer incidence, morbidity, and mortality in Alabama.

A statewide approach to cancer control is the most effective way to tackle such a monumental public health concern. No single agency or organization can meet the challenge alone.

Physicians, nurses, other health care professionals, community leaders, business leaders, researchers and cancer advocates who share our mission are encouraged to join the ACCCC.

Funding for the ACCCC is provided by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Grant Number U55/CCU 421939).

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.alabamacancercontrol.org

Coming Next Month:

- Cancer Survivorship
- March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition
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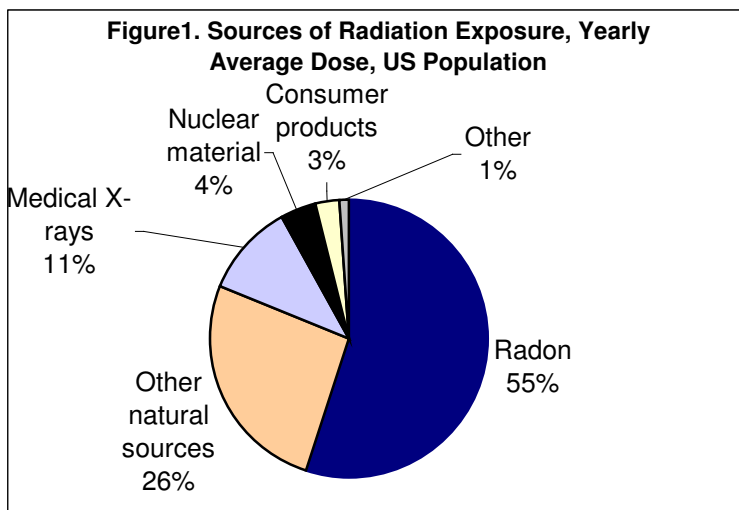
Reduce Exposure to Indoor Radon

Radon causes more than 20,000 cases of lung cancer deaths each year. Smokers exposed to radon have a much higher lung cancer risk. Because millions of homes have an elevated radon level, Alabamians should test their homes for radon every two years and retest if structural changes are made to the home. Subsidized by EPA grant funds, County Extension offices sell radon test kits at wholesale prices to anyone wishing to test for radon.

Educating Alabamians about the risk of radon, how to prevent their homes from having a radon problem, or how to fix an existing radon problem are objectives in the Comprehensive Cancer Control plan. For high radon counties the Alabama Department of Public Health recommends the following (1) when building a home, install one or more radon escape stacks at the time of construction; (2) when purchasing a home, require a radon test prior to closing; and (3) occupants of existing homes in high radon counties should test their homes for excessive radon in both the summer and winter seasons and install a radon removal system if needed.

Did You Know? People are exposed to radiation from many different sources including background levels of radiation in the environment. The largest source of manmade radiation exposure comes from X-rays, used daily in medicine and business. Otherwise, people are primarily exposed to natural radiation from the sun, cosmic rays and radioactive elements in the earth's crust.³

Figure 1 shows the sources of radiation exposure nationally.



Information on radon is available on line at www.aces.edu/radon or by calling 1-800-582-1866. If you have a radon level of 4 pCi/l or more, take steps to remedy the problem as soon as possible.

³ Ionizing radiation fact sheet series: No. 1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. <http://www.epa.gov/rpdweb00/docs/ionize/402-f-98-009.htm>. Found 1/4/2006.