Health Care Provider's Guide to Radon

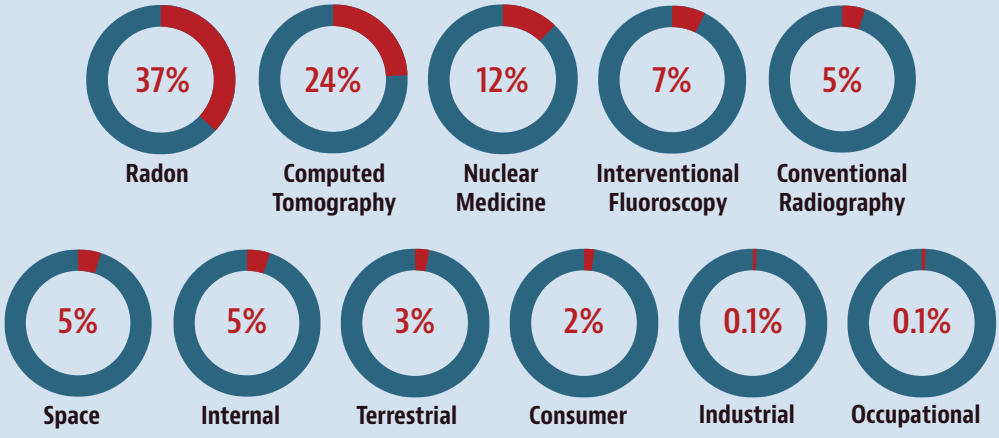
SAVE MORE LIVES

PREVENT RADON-INDUCED LUNG CANCER

Why should my patients know about radon?

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, and the leading environmental cause of cancer mortality. For patients who smoke, exposure to radon and tobacco smoke increases their risk for lung cancer. Reducing lung cancer risk from radon exposure is a health intervention that does not require behavior change.

Average Annual Radiation Dose per Person at 1.4 pCi/L (Picocurie per Liter)



What is radon?

Radon is an odorless, colorless, tasteless radioactive gas with a half-life of almost four days. Radon is decay product of radium naturally found in soil, rock and construction materials, such as concrete. According to the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurement, indoor radon exposure is the largest contributor to radiation in the U.S. On average, radon accounts for 37% of a person's total annual dose of ionizing radiation, as seen in the graphic above.

What are the health effects?

Radon is a "class A" carcinogen that causes lung cancer. Radon gas can seep through cracks, plumbing/electrical holes, and construction joints of homes. Radon and its decay products inhaled into the lungs irradiate the cells of the mucous membrane, bronchi and other pulmonary tissues damaging DNA, increasing genetic mutations and the risk of developing lung cancer.

What are the extent of radon problems in Florida?

In Florida, one in five homes tested has elevated radon levels and can be in many types of structures, such as old homes, new homes, and high-rise condominiums.

Radon-induced lung cancers are estimated to represent 13% of all lung cancers contributing 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year.

How are radon levels determined?

Testing is the only way to determine the amount of radon in a structure. Indoor air radon levels are measured using test kits from either a hired state certified professional or by purchasing a kit from a local home improvement store. If elevated levels (4 pCi/L or above) are found, a mitigation system can reduce radon exposure.

How can I help my patients?

Inform your patients by adding a question about radon on your patient history form and open the conversation: "Have you tested your home for radon?" Encourage your patients to test their homes for radon and mitigate if high levels are found.

For more information and educational materials about radon, visit our website at radon.floridahealth.gov or contact the Department of Health's Radon and Indoor Air Program at the number below.

Learn more. Contact the Radon Program at 800-543-8279.

Florida HEALTH