



# Radon Testing in Wisconsin Schools

## What you need to know

### FAST FACTS

#### Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer

- Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year.<sup>1</sup>
- This naturally occurring gas seeps into homes and buildings from the surrounding soil. You can't see or smell it.
- Radon is common throughout Wisconsin. Nationally, it is estimated that nearly one in five schools has at least one classroom with high radon levels.<sup>2</sup>

#### Wisconsin DHS recommends that all schools test their radon levels

- Testing is the only way to know if a school has high radon levels.
- We recommend testing occur every five years or upon completion of any major renovations.
- Proven techniques are available to lower radon levels in schools and lower the risk of lung cancer from radon.

#### How to get started testing

The Department of Health Services strongly recommends using a licensed radon testing professional to conduct testing at your school.

If school personnel organize and conduct radon testing on their own, it is very important that proper testing procedures be followed.

Some radon testing labs offer short-term radon test kits at reduced rates if purchased in bulk. Schools should contact a radon test kit lab directly to negotiate reduced rates.

#### How to fix a radon problem

Common techniques used to fix high radon levels in schools include:

- Adjusting HVAC systems to reduce radon.
- Installing a mitigation system to prevent radon from entering the building.

#### Who can help?

Visit [lowradon.org](http://lowradon.org) to find contact information for your local radon information center, which can help answer any questions, as well as a list of certified radon testing and mitigation professionals.

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Health Risks of Radon. <https://www.epa.gov/radon/health-risk-radon>

2. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Radon in Schools. <https://www.epa.gov/radon/radon-schools>



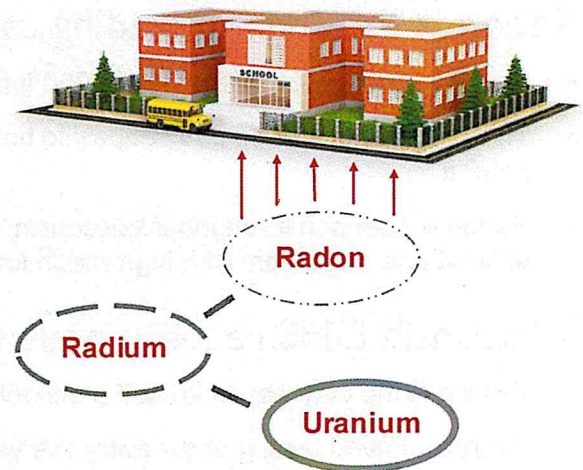
# How does radon cause lung cancer?

## Radon gives off tiny radioactive particles that can damage our lungs.

- Radon is formed from the natural decay of uranium and radium in rocks and soil.
- Radon gives off tiny radioactive particles that are released into the air we breathe. Over time, breathing in these radioactive particles can damage the cells that line our lungs.<sup>3</sup>
- Radon is not likely to cause lung cancer during childhood; however, taking action to fix high radon levels is an important step in preventing their risk of lung cancer later in life.
- School staff who work in a building with high radon levels over a long period of time are at a higher risk of lung cancer caused from radon.
- The connection between radon and lung cancer has been well established through different research studies among a variety of populations.<sup>3</sup>

## Any room or building can have high radon levels.

- Radon enters homes and buildings through cracks in the floors or foundation.
- Radon levels are very low outdoors, but can accumulate to high concentrations inside buildings.
- Some rooms and buildings have more radon than others due to pressure differences, building types, and underlying soil.
- Any building can have high radon, whether old or new, well-sealed or drafty, and with or without a basement.



# Testing is the only way to know your school's radon levels

## Wisconsin DHS recommends that all schools test their radon levels.

- It is recommended testing be done on school days during cold-weather months.
- It is recommended that a licensed radon testing professional conduct the testing in your school.
- To connect with these professionals or your nearest radon information center, visit:

[www.lowradon.org](http://www.lowradon.org)

▶ **For most school children and staff, the second largest contributor to their radon exposure is likely to be their school environment.<sup>4</sup>**

3. The Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc. (CRCPD). Reducing the Risk from Radon: Information and Interventions. A Guide for Health Care Providers. [http://www.radonleaders.org/sites/default/files/HealthCareProfessionalsGuide\\_Radon\\_2018\\_FINAL\\_CRCPD%20E-18-2.pdf](http://www.radonleaders.org/sites/default/files/HealthCareProfessionalsGuide_Radon_2018_FINAL_CRCPD%20E-18-2.pdf)

4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Radon Measurement in Schools," July 1993 (EPA-402-R-92-014).

This information fact sheet was created pursuant Wis. Stat. § 254.34 (1)(h).