

Radon May Cause Preventable Lung Cancer in Pets and Humans Alike

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It is well established that high radon levels in a home can increase the risk of lung cancer in people. Did you know that exposure to radon may also increase lung cancer risk in pets? A [study](#) in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine from 2020 suggests this may be possible.

Radon is a breakdown product of uranium which occurs naturally in many rocks and soils. As the radon is released into the soil, it makes its way to the surface and can enter homes from underneath. When people breathe this gas for many years, the radiation increases lung cancer risk. Pets spend much of their lives in homes and are also exposed to this same radioactivity.

Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine scientists hypothesized that dogs and cats in higher radon risk zones (according to [EPA's map of radon risk zones](#)) may have a higher incidence of lung cancer. Researchers identified 690 lung cancer cases in dogs and 205 in cats. These were translated into lung cancer incidence rates in Zone 1 (highest radon risk), Zone 2 (medium radon risk), and Zone 3 (lowest radon risk) counties. In both dogs and cats, lung cancer risk was doubled in Zone 1 counties versus Zone 2 and 3 counties.

Authors of the study caution that future research is needed to fully characterize the risk of radon-induced lung cancer in pets, as this is the first study of its kind.

Many Georgia homes have dangerous radon levels indoors because of the high uranium content in granite rock and soil under our homes. Despite this, most Georgians have not tested their home for this cancer-causing gas. Testing for radon gas is inexpensive, can be done without the help of a contractor, and can be fixed if found in elevated levels.

Georgians can purchase test kits from their local hardware store or at the [UGA Radon Program's website](#). Anyone with a library card can check out an electronic radon monitor at their local [Georgia Public Library System branch](#).

Regardless of home location, age, or build, the UGA Radon Program recommends every home test for radon at least every two years. All homes with high radon levels can be reduced to safe levels through a process called radon mitigation. The UGA Radon Program has [resources](#) to help Georgians find qualified radon mitigation professionals. This ensures that all occupants, pets, and people alike, remain radon safe.