



Concerning Our Health

Providers Can Help Reduce Radon-Induced Lung Cancer

Health care providers play a key role in reducing their patients' exposure to unnecessary radiation. Medical imaging is on the rise, so it is even more critical to reduce radiation exposure from other sources, including radon.

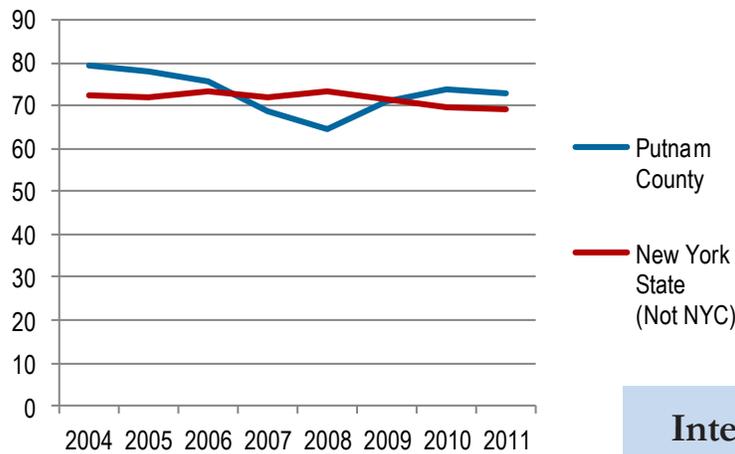
Unfortunately, living and working in Putnam County brings higher risks because the area is considered a "high-risk radon zone," by the Environmental Protection Agency. In fact, according to the New York State Department of Health, 32 percent of Putnam County homes are estimated to have radon levels high enough that steps should be taken to remediate the problem.

Radon occurs naturally from the decay of uranium found in the environment. This odorless, tasteless radioactive gas however is the second leading cause of lung cancer mortality in the U.S., and

the first cause among non-smokers. Given the magnitude of smoking-induced cancers, the risk posed by radon is often overlooked or diminished in comparison.

Together radon and tobacco exposure act synergistically to increase risk, so reducing either of the two can substantially reduce a person's lung cancer risk. If considered as a separate disease category, lung cancer among non-smokers would rank among the top ten causes of all cancer mortality in the U.S. (See related story on free smoking cessation program on page 3.)

LUNG AND BRONCHUS CANCER INCIDENCE PER 100,000*



Changes in Zika Testing for Pregnant Women

Commercial Zika virus (ZIKV) testing is now readily available and health care providers no longer need to arrange testing through the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH).

With decreasing ZIKV infections in the Western hemisphere, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) have revised the recommendations for testing pregnant women. Symptomatic pregnant women and those pregnant who have had a known exposure or show ultrasound abnormalities that suggest ZIKV infection, should continue to be tested. However, asymptomatic pregnant women with possible exposure should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. All pregnant women should continue to be asked about travel/possible ZIKV exposure before and during the pregnancy at each prenatal visit.

Testing continues for non-pregnant women and men who develop or have symptoms within four weeks of returning from an area that had active ZIKV transmission. Anyone who presents with Guillaine-Barre syndrome and who has travelled to one of these areas as well should also continue to be tested.

A number of countries where ZIKV was previously found are now considered areas with interrupted transmission and scientists have determined the virus is no longer present there. This means all travelers, including pregnant women, may travel to these specific countries with no known risk of contracting ZIKV from mosquitoes. For the latest information on areas affected, visit: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information

For the complete NYSDOH health advisory on ZIKV, visit the PCDOH website at: www.putnamcountyny.com/health/for-health-care-providers/.

Interventions providers can use to reduce radon risk

- 1 Ask patients if they have tested their home for radon. If they have not, inform them about the health risk posed by radon.
- 2 Urge patients to test their home for radon. It is an easy test that they can perform themselves. Inexpensive, reliable kits are available from the New York State Department of Health and in local hardware stores.
- 3 Add radon testing questions to the routine electronic medical record questionnaire.
- 4 Provide information in your office that promotes radon testing and mitigation. Information can be obtained from the following sources: www.epa.gov/radon and www.cdc.gov/radon. Brochures for patients can be ordered from the Iowa Cancer Consortium at www.canceriowa.org/breathingeasier.

Source: *Guide for Health Care Providers, Reducing the Risk From Radon: Information and Interventions*, available online at www.radonleaders.org.

Putnam County Department of Health Wins \$55,000 Award

A total of \$55,000 has been awarded to the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) through a competitive, New York State Department of Health program focused on chronic disease prevention. Nationally-accredited health departments, such as Putnam County's, were at an advantage with an automatic \$7,500 base payment. An additional \$5,000 automatic payment went to all agencies who competed, due to the amount of work involved. The remaining funds were distributed to just 20 health departments based on performance and county population, and Putnam received an additional \$42,500.

Only 50 percent of health departments vying for the funds were awarded competitive monies. The PCDOH received perfect scores with the "fully demonstrated" designation in four categories and three near-perfect scores with the "largely demonstrated" designation. Extensive documentation was



required, explaining health department activities in seven key areas, such as engaging community partners. The evaluation process used by the State Health Department was similar to the process for national accreditation formulated by PHAB, the Public Health Accreditation Board. This was done because national accreditation may become mandatory in the future.

As with all performance-based awards, the funds must be used to support specified public health services. New York State-recommended activities include conducting campaigns to reduce chronic diseases, and to promote enhanced screening activities and follow-up care by individual providers. Funds may also be used for accreditation or reaccreditation fees. The PCDOH will work with community partners involved in Putnam's Community Health Improvement Plan to prioritize and develop ideas for the use of the funds.

First Putnam Symposium on Community Resilience Looks at Child Mental Health after Disasters

The dose-response relationship can be applied not only to toxin or chemical exposures, but also to contact with specific, disturbing elements of a community disaster. The impact of these traumatic elements has been studied and quantified by researchers to predict mental health distress on children and their families, and the ability of a community to bounce back following a disaster.

This topic was discussed by David Abramson, PhD, director of the Population Impact, Recovery, and Resilience Lab at NYU's College of Global Public Health, at the first Symposium on Community Resilience organized by Putnam County's Community Resilience Coalition (CRC) last October. Putnam County is one of two communities in the United States selected to participate in the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities (RCRC) Initiative, led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute and Save the Children.

Dozens of child-serving institutions were in attendance for the keynote presented by Dr. Abramson, a member of the RCRC National Leadership Board. Data from his post-Hurricane Sandy study showed, not surprisingly, that direct physical harm had a greater impact than damage to one's home or direct contact with floodwater, debris and

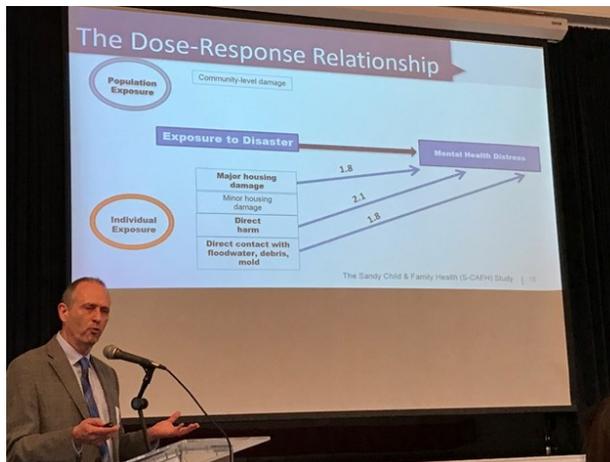
mold. Effects on a child's mental well-being from all these disturbing elements were found to linger even years after the event with ongoing recovery efforts.

Afternoon sessions included one on COOP (continuity of operations planning) training, and another on providing

for children's psychosocial needs following a disaster. In addition, a featured panel presentation hosted four speakers with first-hand, grassroots experience from Hurricane Sandy.

TOP PHOTO: David Abramson, PhD, director of the Population Impact, Recovery, and Resilience Lab at NYU's College of Global Public Health, presented the keynote speech.

BOTTOM PHOTOS: From left are Barbara Garbarino, project coordinator for the Putnam County CRC; Barbara Ilardi, Putnam County Department of Health; Jen Smith, Save the Children; keynote presenter David Abramson, PhD, NYU's College of Global Public Health; Jonathan Sury, National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University; and Jeff Schlegelmilch, National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University.



For more information about the Putnam County CRC, visit: www.putnamcountyny.com/health/community-resilience-coalition/
For more information about the Sandy Child and Family Study, visit: www.ncdp.columbia.edu/research/children-and-disasters/

Freedom From Smoking Program Continues

After a successful launch last summer, the eight-session Freedom From Smoking (FFS) program, offered by the Putnam County Department of Health, kicked off a second season early this year. Enrollment filled quickly with smokers who had resolved to quit for the New Year. The program is free to Putnam residents on a first-come, first serve basis. A waiting list is being compiled now for the next session.

Widely regarded as the gold standard in quit-smoking programs, the evidenced-based FFS program was created by the American Lung Association, an organization with more than 50 years of experience helping smokers quit.

The health department group leader is a FFS/American Lung Association-certified facilitator. The Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley provided additional technical assistance with training on the program that involves lifestyle changes that support tobacco-free living. Nicotine replacement products (NRT) such as the patch and gum are available, also for free, while supplies last. Using NRT is encouraged, and is discussed in detail as part of the program, but it is not required.

Pre-registration is required, as group size is limited. Information on the



Didi Raxworthy, director of the Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley, right, provides technical assistance to health educator Alexa Contreras, from the Putnam County Department of Health, who is the American Lung Association-trained facilitator leading the Freedom From Smoking sessions.

program can be found online at www.freedomfromsmoking.org.

For more information about the program, or for patients who would like to pre-register, contact the Putnam County Department of Health at (845) 808-1390, ext. 43155.

Blood Lead Level Testing is Mandatory for Children

All children, regardless of risk, should have blood lead level (BLL) testing performed at age one and again at two by their health care providers, as required by public health law. Physicians should also question parents and caregivers annually to assess children for risk factors through six years of age. (See “7 Questions to assess lead exposure risk” on back cover.) If one risk factor is found, additional BLL tests should be performed.

For children who meet certain criteria, follow-up testing should be continued up to 18 years of age. Criteria include one of the following: residing in a pre-1978 housing with deteriorating lead-based paint; being adopted from countries with few lead restrictions; access to imported foods or spices, toys, cosmetics or herbal medicines; or having parents or caregivers with occupations or hobbies exposing them to lead. A number of lead poisoning cases have emerged in Putnam County from ingestion of food spices of foreign origin.

Early recognition and continued monitoring allows for both behavioral and environmental action and can mitigate further exposure. The Putnam County Department of Health is able to assist residents in both areas.

Free lead testing of residential water continues to be offered by the New York State Department of Health. More information is available by searching for “free lead testing” at their website at www.health.ny.gov.

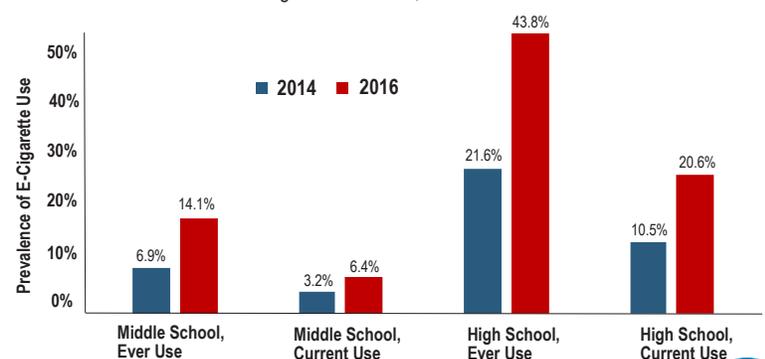
New Report Finds E-Cigarette Use May Lead Youth to Start Smoking, Adults to Stop

A recent report from The National Academies on e-cigarette use finds that while they are likely less harmful than tobacco cigarettes, because of fewer and less potent toxins, they are far from being without any risk. Clear evidence shows e-cigarette use results in dependence and abuse, and increases airborne particulate matter and nicotine in indoor environments, compared to background levels.

For youth who use the products at much higher rates than adults, there is also ample indication that it increases the switch to tobacco cigarettes. For adults who smoke cigarettes however, it appears “e-cig” use may help them quit smoking. The congressionally mandated report, released in January 2018, looked at over 800 peer-reviewed studies in the short time since these products were introduced into the market.

Source: *Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes*, www.nationalacademies.org

EVER AND CURRENT USE OF E-CIGARETTES AND SIMILAR DEVICES
NYS Middle and High School Youth, NY-YTS 2014-2016



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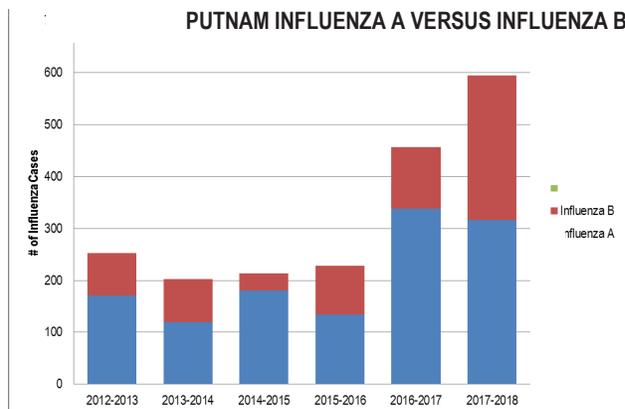
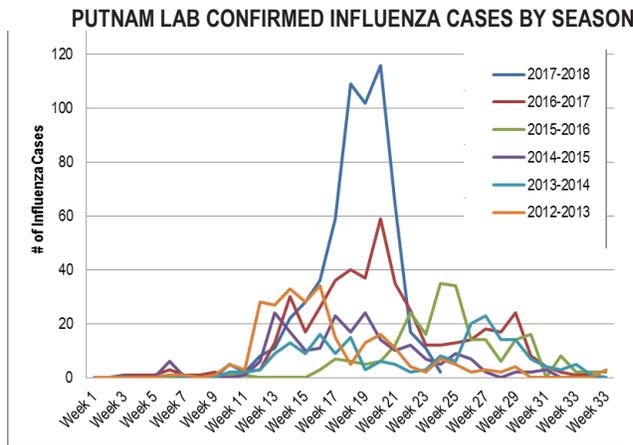
Susan Hoffner, MPH, MCHES, Health Educator

The Putnam influenza season is now in the record books

Proving again that flu seasons are difficult to predict, this year's case numbers showed a dramatic rise and fall in Putnam like the rest of NYS. Looking at virus A versus virus B, it appears virus B had a broader foothold, approximately 40% in Putnam, compared to 15% around the state.

SOURCE:

New York State Department of Health



SOURCE:

Putnam County Department of Health

7 Questions to Assess Lead Risk

- 1 Does child live in, or regularly visit, space that may have lead-based paint, that is either deteriorating or being removed during remodeling or renovation? Older, poorly maintained housing or other facilities, built prior to 1978, may have old paint under newer paint.
- 2 Has child spent time outside U.S.? All foreign-born children should be tested upon arrival.
- 3 Does family use spices or food from other countries, or traditional medicine, health remedies, cosmetics or powders?
- 4 Does child have siblings, housemates or friends being monitored or treated for lead poisoning?
- 5 Does child eat non-food items (pica)? Does child mouth toys, jewelry, keys, etc.?
- 6 Does child have frequent contact with adult whose hobby or job involves lead exposure? (Shooting or making fire arms; fishing using weights; jewelry, stained glass, or pottery making; house or industrial painting; plumbing, renovation or construction; auto or electronics repair, welding; battery recycling; or lead smelting, etc.)
- 7 Does family cook, store or serve food in leaded crystal, pewter or pottery from Asia or Latin America?

Adapted from the New York State Department of Health risk assessment questionnaire for children.