



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cold Winter Weather Increases Health Risks for Lung Cancer; Protect Your Health—Test Your Home Now in Radon Action Month

BREWSTER, NY— Radon is the number-one cause of lung cancer among people who don't smoke. For residents who do smoke, the combination of the two may cause worse health results. Putnam has been classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a "high risk" radon zone. This naturally occurring odorless gas can seep into homes. In winter when homes are sealed up to keep the heat in, trapped radon gas is a particular danger. That's why the EPA designates each January as National Radon Action Month. Smoking is a serious risk all year long, but much like radon, second-hand smoke has less chance of escape in winter.

"To protect our residents' health, I urge home owners to test for radon, and if you smoke, consider quitting or cutting down for the New Year," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. "Testing for radon in a home is not difficult; quitting smoking on the other hand usually takes multiple attempts," she added.

Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, agreed, pointing out that "An easy, convenient do-it-yourself testing kit can be purchased at most hardware stores and online. Putnam has high rates of lung cancer, so it is important to talk about and work to reduce these

two risks. In addition to being in a high radon region, Putnam has higher smoking rates at 18.3 percent, compared to all New York State where the rate is 14.5 percent.”

The EPA estimates radon gas claims the lives of about 21,000 Americans each year. The natural decay of uranium leads to the release of radon in rock, soil and water. High levels of radon in homes usually come from the surrounding soil. Radon gas enters buildings through cracks and openings. Radon-resistant construction can be utilized when building new homes; older homes must be tested. Because radon levels can vary from one house to another, the only way to know for sure is to test every home.

For \$11, the New York State Department of Health offers short-term radon testing kits, which includes the lab fee. The test remains in the home for a number of days and then the kit is sealed and mailed in for analysis. Results are typically returned to the homeowner within a few weeks. Similar test kits can also be purchased at local home and hardware store. Elevated radon levels can be corrected by handy homeowners, or by certified radon mitigation contractors. To learn more about radon, or to order a test kit through NYS and discover mitigation options, visit the state website, or contact them by phone at 518-402-7556. Or call the health department at 845-808-1390, extension 43163.

For residents who would like to quit smoking, help is also available from the health department. The American Lung Association has developed a “gold standard” quit program, called Freedom from Smoking. The Putnam County Department of Health offers the eight-week Freedom From Smoking workshop sessions a couple of times a year, and offers it free of charge to residents. To be placed on a waiting list, or for further information, call extension 43155 at the same health department number, 808-1390. Remember, most smokers require more than one quit attempt to finally quit for good.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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