



February 2018:

**What is the deal with radon?** I was shocked and dismayed to learn that at 16%, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. According to Health Canada, exposure to high radon levels in indoor air results in an increased risk of developing lung cancer, and if that exposure is combined with tobacco use, the risk goes even higher. If, as a life-long smoker, you also experienced long-term exposure to high radon levels, your risk of getting lung cancer rises from 1 in 10 (already dismal) to 1 in 3 – yikes! For a non-smoker living with the same high radon level, the risk is 1 in 20 (not as bad, but still...).

From what I've read, the largest percentage of radon in homes comes from the surrounding soil. It can also come from other sources, such as well water and building materials. In fact, granite countertops have come under close scrutiny as people attempt to determine where specifically the radon in their home is coming from. While granite certainly can emit radon, the levels are typically low and granite surfaces are usually used in well-ventilated areas such as kitchens and baths where the radon would dissipate quickly. There is a specific radon detection kit that is to be used for granite countertops, and it should be noted that turning a container upside down over a regular testing kit on a kitchen counter will likely yield a falsely high result.

The first step in finding out if your home has a radon problem is to get your hands on a testing kit. The ASR recently gave away 20 kits on a first-come first-serve basis, and the response from our members was overwhelming. If you missed out, don't worry – the reasonably-priced kits (as well as more information on radon) are available here.

My radon test kit is in my basement as I write this. (I'm shown here placing the tester in my basement – in retrospect, the test kit itself posed no danger, so I really overdressed!) It is my fervent hope that 90 days from now, I'll be getting results that show low/acceptable radon levels. As a life-long non-smoker, it would be particularly galling to be upping my chances of contracting lung-cancer without at least having had the benefit of looking really cool as I smoked. (Who am I trying to kid? I wouldn't have looked cool even with a du Maurier!) Here's hoping my radon levels are low!

Yours in blogging,

Patty Kalytuk

