

## GET HEALTHY: Lung cancer culprits are smoking and ... RADON?

November is National Lung Cancer Awareness Month

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By Pam Graber

For the Nevada Appeal

What is important to know about lung cancer?

Lung cancer is the No. 1 killer among cancers in both men and women. Even though it can be treated, the survival rate is among the lowest. From the time of diagnosis, only 11 percent to 15 percent of those afflicted survive beyond five years.

### CAUSES

Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer overall, and is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

The third leading cause of lung cancer is second-hand smoke (see "Get Healthy Carson City," Sept. 15, 2010).

### PREVENTABLE

Lung cancer statistics are pretty grim, yet in many cases, lung cancer can be prevented. According to the American Lung Association, quitting smoking is the single most important step a smoker can take to reduce their risk for lung cancer.

Smoking is a difficult habit to quit, yet the time has never been better to do so. For those who reach the point of wanting to quit, there are a lot of resources and tools to help.

There are smoking cessation programs and support groups. There are 24-hour hotlines and ample online information. Higher success rates can result from following psychological advice based on phases and stages of change.

Visit the American Lung Association or the American Cancer Society websites for further information.

If quitting is on your to-do list, you'll be in good company because many people are quitting. Additional support comes from the community: more public places are banning smoking. Tobacco is getting more costly, and non-smokers are becoming less tolerant of second-hand smoke.

Nov. 18 is the 35th Great American Smokeout, an annual American Cancer Society (ACS) event to encourage smokers to use that day to make a plan to quit, or plan in advance to quit smoking that day.

To be successful, the ACS encourages quitters to know what they're up against, know their options and know where to go for help. To learn more, visit [www.cancer.org/](http://www.cancer.org/)

smokeout.

### RADON

Radon exposure is preventable, too. Radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, is a naturally occurring radioactive gas with no odor, color or taste. It is produced by the breakdown of uranium. As a gas, it moves through the soil into the atmosphere where it is harmlessly dispersed if outdoors, but problematic when it enters a building because it can accumulate and become concentrated and trapped.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that one in 15 homes in the United States is estimated to have high levels of radon. You cannot predict where it will be. The only way of knowing a radon level is to test.

Studies have found direct evidence linking radon in homes to lung cancer, according to the EPA. Dr. Maria Neira of the World Health Organization says that "most radon-induced lung cancers occur from low and medium dose exposures in people's homes."

### FREE RADON TEST KITS

Free radon test kits are available at the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension office, 2621 Northgate Lane, Suite 15. It is open from 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

It's never too late to reduce your risk of lung cancer. Don't wait to test and fix a radon problem. If you are a smoker, begin your plan to stop smoking right now. Until you can quit, smoke outside and provide your family with a smoke-free home.

Carson City Health and Human Services

Clinic Hours: Monday-Wednesday and Friday

9 a.m.-4 p.m., by appointment

900 E. Long Street

(775) 887-2190

• Pam Graber is the public information officer for Carson City Health and Human Services. She can be reached at (775) 283-7906 or [pgrab@carson.org](mailto:pgrab@carson.org). More information is available online at [www.gethealthycarsoncity.org](http://www.gethealthycarsoncity.org) or on facebook.