

# Radon can kill, home testing advised

Radon is odorless, tasteless and invisible – and it could be in your home in dangerous levels.

As part of National Radon Action Month, all Oregon residents are urged to test their homes for radon, one of the leading causes of lung cancer in the United States.

“Radon does exist throughout Oregon,” said radon coordinator Brett Sherry, Oregon Public Health Division. “It can be a silent killer in our homes. We hope that everyone would test their homes to protect themselves and their families.”

Testing homes for radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon test kits can be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores or directly from radon testing companies. Many test kits are priced between \$10 and \$25. Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs such as painting or having a new water heater installed, anywhere from \$800 to about \$2,500.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes up from the ground. It is dispersed in the outdoor air, but it can build up to dangerous levels when trapped in buildings. Scientists have long been concerned about the health risk of radon, but never before has there been such overwhelming proof that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after smoking and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Radon levels vary throughout Oregon, depending on the underlying geology. For radon levels in your neighborhood visit the Oregon Public Health Radon Program website to look up radon test results by county or ZIP code: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/rps/radon/index.shtml>.

“Testing also helps us know

what areas may have more radon than others,” Sherry said. “However, it is possible for one home in a neighborhood to test high and neighboring homes to test low. You never know unless you test.”

The test results are sent to the Oregon Public Health Radon Program by the testing companies but do not include exact addresses or homeowner names, just ZIP codes. Anyone needing more information after testing their home can contact the Radon Program.

The Oregon Public Health Radon Program is working with EPA in a nationwide campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure. For more information on radon, radon testing and mitigation, radon-resistant new construction, or to order a test kit online call the Oregon Public Health Radon Program at 971-673-0440, visit [www.healthoregon.org/radon](http://www.healthoregon.org/radon) or visit EPA’s website at [www.epa.gov/radon/nram](http://www.epa.gov/radon/nram).

# Protect debit card from skimming

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“Skimming devices are becoming increasingly harder to detect and often blend in seamlessly with the ATM,” said Robert W.G. Andrew, CEO of BBB serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington. “If you’re going to use an ATM, it’s important to monitor accounts closely, so you can quickly detect fraudulent activity and minimize your losses.”

BBB recommends the following steps to fight card skimming identity thieves:

- Be picky with ATMs – Try to use the same ATM every time. This will make it easier to notice changes and identify attached devices that steal numbers. Experts often recommend choosing bank ATMs over standalone ATMs; thieves sometimes place phony ATMs in public places. Avoid ATMs in poorly lit areas.

- Protect PINs – When entering a PIN number, cover the keypad with a hand to prevent

any cameras from catching digits. False keypads placed over real keypads are also a way scammers get PIN numbers; if the keypad looks different, move on.

- Inspect the scanner – Skimming devices are often false panels attached to the ATM—usually where the card inserts into the machine. Wiggle parts of the ATM that look damaged or different to check for looseness. Also look for new or suspiciously placed cameras and unusual signage.

- Keep an eye on statements – Even the most vigilant person can still fall victim to ATM skimmers, so keep a close eye on accounts and statements. Report suspicious activity immediately. Consumer protections for debit cards vary, but depend largely on when the fraudulent activity is reported. Waiting too long to report fraud can lead to cleaned out bank accounts and difficulty reversing unauthorized charges.

# A healthy diet can help fight off the winter sniffles and coughs

People try many different methods to avoid catching a cold or flu during the winter months. One thing to remember is that simple diet choices can boost our immune system. The following list includes simple things that can boost the immune system to work at peak performance.

- Get plenty of liquids to help prevent viruses and bacteria from taking up residence in your body. The mucus in your nose is actually one of the key

physical barriers that keep germs out of your body. When you’re not well hydrated, it dries up and doesn’t provide that barrier.

- Protein is a building block for a healthy immune system. Choose lean meats, poultry and fish, dried beans, and soy. You can also choose protein-rich plant sources with heart healthy fat, like peanut butter or nuts.

- Choose foods rich in vitamins C and E. These two antioxidant-rich vitamins may protect cells – including those of your immune system – from damage by toxins in the environment. Choose citrus fruits, melons, mangoes, kiwi, pep-

pers, tomatoes, berries, broccoli, cabbage, sweet/white potatoes, winter squash, leafy greens, almonds, hazelnuts, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, safflower oil, whole grains and fortified cereals several times a day.


- Eat probiotic foods to help build up good bacteria in the intestines. These bacteria play a role in helping fend off illnesses. Any fermented food is rich in this type of good bacteria, so choose yogurt, sauerkraut, tofu, brined pickles and aged cheese at least daily.

- Add a zinc-rich food to your daily diet to increase the production of white blood cells in your body. Research shows

that this may reduce the number of days you suffer from a cold. Some foods rich in zinc are yogurt, lean red meat, poultry and fish, almonds, pumpkin

seeds and fortified cereals.

Source: Susan Mills-Gray, Nutrition and Health Education specialist, University of Missouri Extension.



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