



EXPOSURE TO RADON DURING CHILDHOOD “SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES THE RISK OF DEVELOPING LUNG CANCER”

Exposure to naturally-occurring radon gas is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and is responsible for over 1100 deaths in the UK every year. High levels of radon can be found in buildings of any type, size or location with occupants unaware of the potential danger unless a specific test has been carried out.

This year’s Radon Awareness Week campaign, Looking Out for Little Lungs, is calling on parents to ensure their children are not being exposed to harmful levels of radiation whether at home, school or play.

Whilst long term exposure to radon is harmful to everyone regardless of age, Canadian professor and expert in genome damage caused by radon Dr Aaron Goodarzi says, “Exposure to radon during childhood significantly increases the risk of developing lung cancer later in life. Indeed, childhood (ages 0–17 years) exposure to even moderately high radon concentrations (400 Bq/m³) is equivalent to a lifetime exposure at 100 Bq/m³ radon concentration. Thus, while it is advisable for anyone to test their homes and workplaces for radon (and mitigate if a problem is detected), any homes, schools, and childcare centres where small children and young adults spend a great deal of time should become a priority for radon elimination.”

Testing for radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon detectors can be purchased online from a variety of suppliers which will be posted out along with instructions for use. At the end of the test period, detectors should be returned to the supplier so analysis can be carried out at a laboratory that is validated by Public Health England. For a residential property, this process typically costs around £50.

Under health and safety legislation, an assessment of radon should be carried out as part of every employer’s workplace risk assessment. This includes schools, nurseries and other buildings such as sports centres and libraries given there are employees working in these buildings, however this requirement is often overlooked due to a lack of awareness of radon.

The UK Radon Association is urging parents to not only test their own homes for radon but to ask their school governors and childcare providers whether the necessary risk assessments have been carried out.

Chairman of UK Radon Association, Martin Freeman, said “As radon is an invisible hazard, people are often unaware of the risks it could be posing to the occupants of any given building. If radon gas glowed green, for example, and could be seen wafting through our buildings it would be completely unacceptable for nothing to be done to protect our children from it. It is vital that buildings where children spend a lot of time are tested so those with high levels of radon can be identified and systems put in place to reduce the concentration.”

Radon Awareness Week is running from 6th – 12th November 2017. Join in the discussion online using #LittleLungsUK and keep an eye on the campaign website, www.radonweek.co.uk for downloadable resources, video updates and more.

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NOTES TO EDITORS



UK Radon Awareness Week is an annual campaign run by UK Radon Association (UKRA). Now in its third year, the campaign will run from 6th – 12th November 2017.

Exposure to the naturally occurring radioactive gas radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the UK (after smoking). High radon levels can accumulate in buildings of any type, age, size or location. Long term exposure to elevated levels of radon increases the risk of developing lung cancer for both smokers and non-smokers, and over 1100 deaths from the disease each year are attributable to radon exposure.

The Radon Awareness Week campaign aims to raise awareness of radon amongst a wide range of people in the UK. From the general public to employers, healthcare professionals to those in the construction industry, an increased awareness of radon will lead to a reduction in the number of avoidable lung cancer cases claiming lives each year.

The theme for the 2017 campaign is “Looking Out for Little Lungs” with the focus being on minimising the exposure that children receive both at home and when at school or in childcare.

Quotes from Dr Aaron Goodarzi, Assistant Professor at University of Calgary and Canada Research Chair for Genome Damage and Instability Disease and Martin Freeman, Chairman of UK Radon Association, are available on request.

A dedicated website is available where a number of resources such as posters, videos and infographics can be downloaded. This can be found at www.radonweek.co.uk.

Throughout the campaign, the hashtag #radonweek and #LittleLungsUK will be used across social media to encourage discussion on the issue.

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