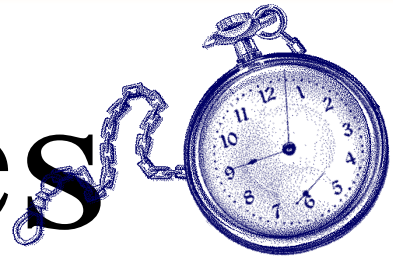


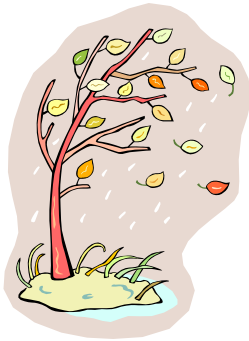
LifeTimes



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In danger of losing your home?
Act now!

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HOME & GARDEN

Realizing the risks of radon

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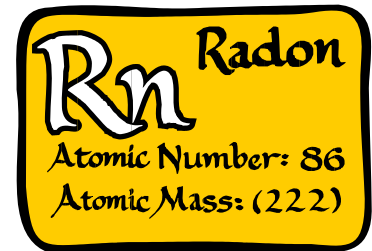
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Radon is a gas you cannot smell, taste or see, but it is dangerous when it accumulates in your home. However, it can be detected to keep your family safe.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon is found everywhere in the United States. It comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. The National Cancer Institute states radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, being second only to cigarette smoking. Approximately 15,000 to 22,000 deaths per year are related to radon exposure.

Radon gas moves through the ground and into your home through gaps, cracks, and holes in the foundation. It can also get into the water supply of your home. Once the radon gas is in your home it can build up to dangerous levels.

Unfortunately, the only way to know if radon is present is to have your home tested. The good news is that testing is relatively easy and inexpensive. Now is a good time to add radon testing to your list of chores. Here are steps for testing your home for radon.



- **Missouri residents can obtain a free radon test kit** from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. An application form is available at health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon/testkit.php. You can also purchase a low-cost radon test kit from your local hardware store.
- **Follow the test kit instructions.** Windows and doors should remain closed during the testing period. Place test kit on the lowest lived-in level of your house. If you frequently use the basement, test there. If not, test on the first floor of your home. The EPA recommends testing in a room frequently used, like a bedroom, den, or playroom, but not in the kitchen or bathroom.
- **Send test findings to the lab specified on the package for analysis.** Test results should come back in a few weeks. Radon is measured in “picocuries per liter of air” or “pCi/L”. If results indicate a level of 4 pCi/L or higher, you should have a follow-up long-range test performed by a professional.

(continued on page 4)

NUTRITION & HEALTH

Canning a gift from the garden

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Turn extra produce into gift jars, or can food for later family meals.

You can do home canning at little cost with acidic foods like fruit, apple sauce, jams and jellies, and pickles. Wrapped with a bow and a bit of calico, home-canned sweet spreads, pickled products, or fruits add a bit of yourself to a gift basket or hostess gift.

- **Choose an easy gift idea.** Turn extra apples into applesauce, sliced apples, spiced apple rings or apple jelly. Create salsa, zucchini pickles, pickled green tomatoes, or relish from end-of-the-garden produce. *Caution:* Pumpkin butter must be frozen, never canned. The product is not acidic enough to safely can at home.
- **Collect equipment.** Acidic foods can be easily canned at home with a few pieces of equipment:
 - A water bath canner
 - Standard canning jars in pint, quart or half-pint size
 - New canning flats or lids
 - Clean, rust-free canning rings
 - A jar funnel
 - A jar lifter.
- You might be able to borrow canning equipment from a friend or relative to reduce cost. You can easily make a water bath canner

using a deep saucepot or stock pot that is 3 to 4 inches taller than standard pint or quart jars. Add a rack to raise the jars off the bottom of the stockpot. Create a simple rack by placing a round cake cooling rack, or old jar rings, on the bottom of the stock pot.

- **Choose a safe recipe.** Safe recipes have been tested to ensure the ingredients and processing time are sufficient to prevent spoilage. *Do not change canning recipes.* Creative home recipes are safer if frozen since they are of unknown

Safe canning requires the use of a tested recipe, exact measurements and recommended processing time.

acidity or density. Recommended recipe sources include:

- National Center for Home Food Preservation.
www.uga.edu/nchfp/
- University of Missouri.
extension.missouri.edu/main/DisplayCategory.aspx?C=194
- Ball Blue Book of Preserving (current edition). Available from:
www.freshpreservingstore.com/detail/TCL+14400214001



- **Gather quality produce.** Use produce at peak of ripeness and of excellent quality. Food that is wilted, overripe, insect damaged, or has soft spots is not recommended for canning purposes. Try to can or pickle fruits and vegetables within a few hours of picking the produce. Produce loses moisture and quality deteriorates rapidly once the produce is picked. If this is not possible, store the produce in the refrigerator, or in a cool place.
- **Prepare equipment.** Sterilize jars if necessary.
- **Follow canning recipes exactly.** A sealed jar by itself will not ensure a safe product. Any hot product added to a jar, and then closed, will yield a seal. Safe canning requires the use of a tested recipe, exact measurement of ingredients, and recommended processing time. Measure all ingredients carefully. Do not over pack jars of pickles. Do not add extra vegetables to salsa. This changes the acidity of the final product and may result in spoilage. Follow recommended processing times. Processing times are carefully calculated to destroy potential spoilage bacteria.

For complete canning instructions, see the above recommended recipe sources.

FAMILY LIFE

Creating family traditions

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Every family has traditions of some form. What traditions does your family have? Traditions and rituals are important because they help families pass on their values, attitudes and goals to future generations. All traditions and rituals have three common elements.

1. **Traditions are repetitive.** An activity must be repeated on a regular basis in order to be termed a tradition. It may be repeated daily, weekly, yearly or within some other time frame.
2. **Traditions are significant.** They must hold some meaning and value for the family members.
3. **Traditions are coordinated.** One person performing an activity does not comprise a family tradition. At least two members, and often the entire family, must be involved in the activity together for it to be considered a tradition.

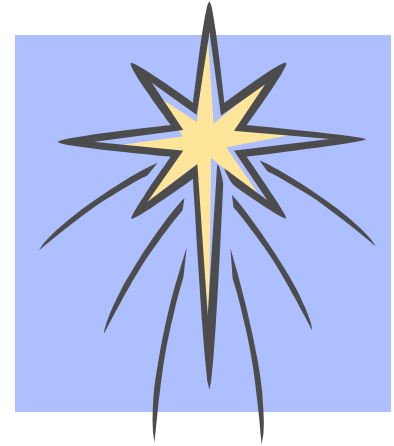


Traditions and rituals can be classified into several different groups based on the purposes they serve. Here are some examples to consider when creating your own family traditions.

- **Connection traditions** promote a sense of family bonding. They can involve daily rituals and more infrequent activities. Some examples of connection traditions include family meals, bedtime activities, family outings and vacations.

No matter what traditions your family has, consider adding new activities occasionally.

- **Love traditions** help family members develop one-on-one intimacy with each other and also make individuals feel special. They include date nights, birthdays, anniversaries, Father's Day, Mother's Day and Valentine's Day.
- **Holiday traditions** include activities focused on religious and secular holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year's Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day.



- **Community traditions** link families to the communities in which they live and connect them to a larger social network than just the family. These traditions include volunteering at a food bank or soup kitchen, attending a founder's day carnival or parade, and participating in fundraising activities that benefit a local community organization.

No matter what traditions your family has, consider adding new activities occasionally. They might become new traditions that your family will enjoy and treasure for years to come.



Realizing the risks of radon *(continued from front page)*

To locate a professional in your area who specializes in radon testing and mitigation, contact:

Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
930 Wildwood, P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570
Radon Website: www.epa.gov/epahome/exitepa.htm
Phone: 573-751-6160 or 1-866-628-9891
Email: info@dhss.mo.gov

If levels continue to read high, a radon mitigation system will need to be installed in your home. According to the EPA, several methods exist to reduce radon levels in your home. One common method is to use a vent pipe system and fan, which pulls radon from the soil under the foundation and vents it outside above the house. This system is known as a *soil suction radon reduction system* and does not require major changes to your home.

Radon contractors may use a variety of methods. The right method may depend on the design of your home. In addition to installing the mitigation system, a contractor will recommend sealing any foundation cracks and openings in your home.

The cost of reducing radon in the home can vary greatly. The good news is that radon levels can be reduced by up to 99 percent. For more information, see the EPA's publication *Consumer's Guide to Radon Reduction*, available at www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/consguid.html

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PERSONAL FINANCE

In danger of losing your home? Act now!

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If you are in danger of losing your home, or you know someone who is, don't wait another minute. Get free advice from a counseling agency approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

- Call 1-888-995-HOPE (4673) to speak to a counselor. *Foreclosure assistance is free.*
- Call United Way at 211 to find a local counselor.
- Contact your lender immediately.
- Do not ignore letters and phone calls.
- Don't fall victim to a scam.

Visit www.makinghomeaffordable.gov and www.995hope.org for more information.

(This information is provided by the St. Charles County Housing and Foreclosure Initiative.)