



888-395-1033 wellcare® Hotline
www.wellcarehotline.org

January 2013
Volume 5, Issue 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From the wellcare® Well Owners Network

January is National Radon Action Month!

Have you tested your air and water for radon? You can't see, smell or taste radon, but it may be a problem in your home and water system. Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon can be found all over the U.S. It can get into any type of building - homes, offices, and schools - and result in a high indoor radon level. But you and your family are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home, where you spend most of your time.

Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon. EPA and the Surgeon General recommend testing all homes at the lowest level for radon. EPA also recommends testing in schools. Testing is inexpensive and easy - it should only take a few minutes of your time. Contact your state radon office [here](#) to locate a certified laboratory in your area that can perform radon testing or contact the wellcare Hotline at 888-395-1033 for assistance.

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Upcoming Events

January:

National Radon Action Month

[Website](#)

February:

National Poison Prevention Month

[Website](#)

March:

National Groundwater Awareness Week
March 10-16, 2013

[Website](#)

World Water Day

March 22, 2013

[Website](#)

For more information on radon, view EPA's *Citizens Guide to Radon* [here](#).

For more information on *Radon & Groundwater* click our information sheet below:

wellcare® information for you about **Radon & Groundwater**

What is Radon?

You may be familiar with concerns about radon in the air in your home. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that has no color, odor or taste. It comes from the natural breakdown of uranium and radium in the ground. Soil under the home releases radon, which escapes to the air, where it can dissolve in water and accumulate in your well. High levels of radon are commonly detected in certain kinds of bedrock, such as granite and dark shale.

What are the health effects of Radon?

Radon can be inhaled when it is released from water while showering, washing dishes or cooking. It also can be ingested directly through drinking water. Inhaled radon is of greatest concern as it increases the risk of lung cancer. Drinking water contaminated by radon may raise the risk of stomach cancer, though this risk is extremely small.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), only about 1-2 percent of radon in indoor air comes from drinking water. In general, for every 10,000 pCi/L of radon in drinking water, 1 pCi/L is transferred to the indoor air.

How do I test for Radon?

The EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend that homes first be tested for radon in indoor air. Radon is measured in "picocuries" per liter (abbreviated "pCi/L"). If the test on air results in a reading of 4 pCi/L or higher, the EPA recommends that radon also be tested in drinking water.

A state laboratory certification office or state radon office can direct you to laboratories equipped to test drinking water for radon. If your test results indicate radon is present, contact your state radon office or the wellcare® hotline to find out if any action is needed.

What is the treatment for Radon in drinking water?

Fortunately, radon can be eliminated through one of two types of water treatment. Aeration devices bubble air through the water, and then use an exhaust fan to vent the radon outdoors. GAC (granular activated carbon) filters use activated carbon to remove the gas. GAC filters tend to cost less than aeration devices. However, radioactivity collects on the GAC filter, which may cause a handling hazard and require special disposal methods. It should be noted that GAC filters have a short life span and need to be changed out on a regular basis. A licensed water treatment professional in your area can suggest and install the best treatment system for your situation.

wellcare® information on Radon & Groundwater Updated April 2007

Easy Ways to Save Energy at Home

There are many advantages to saving energy nowadays including lowering your utility bills which in turn saves you money and using less energy means less harmful emissions released into the environment. There are several easy things you can do to save energy around your home that won't break the bank. Below are some ideas:

1. Unplug Your Appliances

Some of you may know the term "phantom load." This term refers to any appliance or electronic gizmo that uses energy even when turned off. That includes: TV, coffee maker, garage door opener, microwave, clock radio and, well, just about any

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WSC and the Water Well Trust is now on YouTube!



Sanitary Water Wells for People With No Water Supply

The Water Well Trust (WWT) is a 501(c)3 organization created by the Water Systems Council to help low-income families in the U.S., who need access to safe drinking water, to get wells. To read more and to find out what you can do to help visit [the WWT website](#).

electronic. Yes, even your cell phone and MP3 player chargers siphon energy when plugged in even if they're not charging anything. You can eliminate phantom loads by unplugging appliances and electronics when you are not using them, or by plugging them into a power strip and turning the strip off when they're not in use.

2. Change Your Light Bulbs

One of the least expensive changes you can make in your home is replacing your light bulbs. According to Energy Star, one of its qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL), which cost just a few dollars, can save more than \$40 over its lifetime. It uses 75 percent less energy and lasts at least 6 times longer than an incandescent bulb.

3. Buy Energy-efficient Appliances

If you are shopping for new appliances, look for the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star label before making a purchase. Energy Star appliances use between 10 and 50 percent less energy than conventional appliances. The cost may be more upfront, but in most cases will save you more in the long run. Also look for WaterSense labeled products which save water and energy! Find out more at [from EnergyStar](#) and [EPA's WaterSense](#).

4. Use a Programmable Thermostat

Programmable thermostats work by automatically adjusting your home's temperature to your schedule, keeping it comfortable only when you need it to be. If you don't already adjust your thermostat throughout the day, a programmable thermostat could save you as much as \$180 every year in energy costs. For more information on programmable thermostats, check out [EnergyStar](#).

5. Use Fans

In the summer, use stationary, ceiling and whole-house fans to cool your home, reducing the need

Conserve Energy by Upgrading Your Hot Water Heater

Hot water heaters may seem innocent enough, but they are actually silent energy hogs that should be updated to conserve energy and save you money on your bills. Just one topic of many sustainable ideas and solutions for your living space covered in "Your Green Abode," the options to improve your water heating's energy use range from behavioral adaptations to purchasing an Energy Star recommended high-efficiency water heater to replace your current behemoth.

Read the entire article [here](#)

Nominate A Teacher!

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education. Two teachers from

for air conditioning. In the winter, change ceiling fans to move counter-clockwise to keep the heat lower in the room reducing the need for heat. For every degree you raise your thermostat, you reduce your cooling and heating costs between 7 and 10 percent.

6. Change your air filter regularly

Check your filter every month, especially during heavy use months (winter and summer). If the filter looks dirty after a month, change it. At a minimum, change the filter every 3 months. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make the system work harder to keep you warm or cool - wasting energy. A clean filter will also prevent dust and dirt from building up in the system - leading to expensive maintenance and/or early system failure.

7. Tune up your HVAC equipment yearly

Just as a tune-up for your car can improve your gas mileage, a yearly tune-up of your heating and cooling system can improve efficiency and comfort. Learn more:

[Maintain your Equipment: A Checklist](#)

[Finding the Right Contractor: 10 Tips](#)

8. Make Windows More Efficient

Even if you seal windows well, window glass is a thin barrier against outside temperatures. If you can afford it, install new storm windows in your home. If you can't install new storm windows, you can cover windows with a transparent material; such as bubble wrap or window insulation film, to improve insulation. You might also consider using cellular shades, layered curtains and or draft snakes to help reduce heat loss from a window.

9. Improve Insulation

It is estimated that more than 50 percent of a home's energy use goes toward heating and cooling. Beefing up the insulation in your house's

each EPA region will be selected to receive the award. 2012-13 nominations are due January 31.

Know a teacher that should receive this award? Nominate [here](#).

attic, walls, floors and ceilings slows the flow of air between inside and outside, making it easier to control your home's temperature. And, can save up to 10 percent on your total annual energy bill. The easiest place to add insulation in your home is the attic. Find out more at [EnergyStar](#).

10. Conserve Water

Surprise! Yes, conserving water isn't just for summer months or when there are drought conditions. Conserving water can also save on your energy bill as your pump will have to work less to supply water to your home. So why not practice water conservation all year long? And when you use less hot water, you'll also see savings.

According to Department of Energy, water heating is the third most energy consuming function in the home. To cut down on water use, take faster showers and be conscious of the water you use when washing dishes and clothes and preparing food.

Industry News

NEW Federal Regulations on Lead in Drinking Water System Components

Regulatory efforts to minimize the lead content in drinking water are currently focused on reducing the lead content in drinking water system components and all other products that come in contact with potable water. While new national lead-free limits will go into effect in 2014, strict state limits and testing requirements are already in force. Manufacturers are quickly working to bring their products into compliance, and obtaining the product certifications necessary to comply with specific state regulations. Taking such steps will ensure uninterrupted market access, provide competitive advantage and contribute to the health of consumers.

Read Underwriters Laboratories overview on the new regulations [here](#).

WSC: PAS Standard Updated with New "Lead Free" Listings

WSC Performance Standards And Recommended Installation Procedures for Sanitary Water Well Pitless Adapters, Pitless Units, and Well Caps; PAS-97(2012) Standard has been updated and now includes a more detailed listing of products including "lead free" products. See all the listings [here](#).

Your Septic System

Be SepticSmart! A new EPA program aims to educate homeowners about septic system care and maintenance. Proper maintenance of septic systems helps save money and reduces risks to public health and the environment. For more information click [here](#).

Kids Place: Indoor Winter Water Fun!

BRING THE SNOW INSIDE:

When you have a lot of snow and it's too cold to play outside, have your child(ren) help you fill large empty containers, the sandbox or a sink with new snow to play in. Add pre-made colored ice-cubes of different sizes to the snow. Another idea is to use water color sets and paint the snow. As the snow melts the colors will blend. Collect old mittens for children to use while playing in the colored snow.

FREEZE SMALL TOYS IN ICE-CUBE TRAYS (OR IN VARIOUS SIZE CONTAINERS):

Place frozen ice-cubes on a covered table or cookie sheet and give children plastic and wood mallets to chip away the ice to find out what is inside! Great fun and they'll be sure to rush to you to show you their "prizes."

DRIVING ON ICE:

Fill three jellyroll pans with water and freeze. Add

sand in some areas over the ice to give the ice some depth variation. As the snow melts in those areas there will be "puddles" and "gravel roads." Gather small match-box cars and drive over the ice.

For more ideas click [here](#).

Toys used for these projects should be age appropriate as recommended by the manufacturer to prevent choking hazards.

Q & A from the wellcare® Hotline

Question: When having my water tested, should I test before or after the water goes through my treatment device?

Answer: If this is a routine (your annual water test) test, it is recommended to test both before and after the treatment device. Water is tested prior to treatment to see what the current water quality is in case the power goes out and to know if there has been any change from the previous test.

Water is tested after treatment to confirm the treatment is still working properly.

If testing before and after treatment is not feasible, it is best to test the water prior to any treatment devices.

For more information on well water testing click [here](#).

Previous newsletters with additional tips can be found [here](#).

WSC has over 80 different wellcare® information sheets that can help you and your family learn more about managing a water well and protecting your water supply. Visit our [website](#) or contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033.