



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department  
**RADIUM FACT SHEET**  
(STAFF HANDOUT)

**What is Radium?**

- Radium is a metal that is found in nature.
- Radium can be found in varying levels in the earth- soil, water, rocks and plants.

**How might I be exposed to Radium?**

- We are all exposed to low levels of radium every day.
- You can also be exposed if your drinking water comes from a well that contains radium.
- Radium dissolves from the rock and enters the well water.

**How would I know if my drinking water contains Radium?**

- Community public water systems test their well water for radium. If the amount of radium found exceeds drinking water standards, the water system is notified and a plan is developed to reduce levels.



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- Private well owners are responsible for having their wells tested for radium.

**What is the drinking standard for radium?**

- Radium is measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/l) of water. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set 5pCi/l as the MCL (maximum containment level) for drinking. It is usually based on the combined amount of Ra-226 and Ra-228.

**What is the MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level)?**

- According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, the MCL is considered the legally enforceable standard. These standards are enforced in order to protect the public health by limiting contaminants in the water.

**Is the county going to test my well?**



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- Homeowners assume certain responsibilities when they purchase homes with wells and septic tanks. Just as it is your responsibility to maintain your oil tank from contaminating surrounding soil, you must be responsible for maintaining the safety of your well water.

- No, the owner of a well **must have the well water collected and analyzed** by a New Jersey State Certified Lab. Here are a listing of certified labs:

South Jersey Testing Company, Bridgeton, NJ 856-455-4204

Quality Control Lab, Pitman, NJ 856-592-1919

Vineland Environmental Labs, Vineland, NJ 856-692-6800

Cape Environmental Labs, Cape May Courthouse, NJ 609-463-0077

Garden State Labs, Inc, Hillside, NJ 800-273-8901

**How much does it cost to have my well tested for radium?**

- About \$270.00



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**What are the health concerns relating to radium in drinking water?**

- There are no immediate health risks or symptoms from drinking water that contains radium. However, it may cause health problems over long periods of time.
- Over decades, exposure to radium can increase the risk of bone cancer.

**Is it safe for my children to play in the dirt in our backyard?**

- Yes, the Radium cannot penetrate through layers of soil.

**I rent my home, who is responsible for testing the well?**

- If you live in a rented home or apartment it is the landlords responsibility to test the well and then notify the tenants.
- By March 2004 the Private Well Testing Act will also address renters.



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**What is the Private Well Testing Act (PWTA)?**

- The PWTA requires private wells be tested as condition of each contract for sale of a home that uses wells for drinking water.
- New Jersey is the only known state with the PWTA.
- New Jersey also uses the more stringent 48-hour test. Which provides a more accurate reading.
- New Jersey also requires non-community facilities to test their water supply, such as schools restaurants and businesses.
- New Jersey also requires the testing of community or public water supply.