



Jefferson County



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Central Oregon Public Health Monthly Update

December 29, 2023

Deschutes County Public Health offers tips for a safe and healthy winter

As the temperatures drop this winter, Deschutes County Public Health has tips to protect your mental and physical health. Discover ways to make this season your healthiest yet!

#1 Seek out social connections.

Darker, colder weather can cause some people to feel withdrawn or isolated. Protect against seasonal impacts on your mood by forming a comforting community.

- **Introduce yourself to a new social group.** Think about joining a virtual or in-person opportunity, such as a book club or community class to bond with people who share similar interests.
- **Explore a new hobby.** It's easy to get stuck in an old routine so consider trying a new hobby to spark joy and learning.

#2 Embrace physical activity.

Exercise provides many benefits, such as improved circulation, bone and muscle strength, mental clarity, and sleep.

- **Experiment with a fitness routine.** Selecting the right activities helps you have fun while respecting your body's abilities and need for movement.
- **Stimulate the mind and body.** Alongside high-impact fitness options, walking, meditation, yoga, stretching, and balancing exercises can enhance mind-body awareness. Many local gyms and studios provide a free introductory session to help you explore new activities.

#3 Keep a "safety first" mindset.

Prioritize your safety by making a travel plan that considers health precautions and emergency preparedness from the start.

- **Monitor and test your health status.** Before, during, and after your trip, pay close attention to changes to how your body feels. Consider testing for illnesses like COVID-19 if you feel sick. Free COVID-19 test kits are available across Deschutes County at [these locations](#).

- **Sanitize your hands and consider wearing a mask.** Reduce the spread of germs by washing or sanitizing your hands frequently, and consider wearing a mask when visiting immunocompromised people or when in crowded, indoor spaces.
- **Be ready for the unexpected.** From illnesses to winter storms and even power outages, make sure you check on your emergency supplies (both in the house and car) to be sure you are ready.



#4 Stay aware of winter risks.

Winter weather can cause many health-related injuries like frostbite and hypothermia. You can also get injured from falling on slippery or icy sidewalks and paths, and car accidents are more common.

- **Stay indoors when weather is extremely cold, especially if winds are high.** If you have to go outside during severe storms, be sure to dress appropriately and try to limit your exposure to short durations.
- **Walking on ice is extremely dangerous.** Many cold weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches. Keep steps and walkways as free of ice as possible by using rock salt or another chemical de-icing compound. Applying sand or cat litter to walkways can also reduce the risk of slipping.
- **Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.** Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless toxic gas that is produced when anything is burned. Gas and oil furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, and wood burning and gas stoves all make carbon monoxide in the home. The only way to know if you are being exposed to carbon monoxide is by using a detector.

- **Improve your winter weather driving skills.** Deschutes County offers [SkidCar training](#) to the public to help individuals learn how to better handle driving during winter road conditions.

If you need warm shelter during the daytime or overnight, please call 211 for warming shelter locations.

For more information regarding winter safety, please visit [Oregon Health Authority](#), [CDC](#), or [Ready.gov](#).

We Want to Hear from You!



We know that this newsletter originated out of a global pandemic and the need to provide consistent, up-to-date, accurate information about COVID-19 in the Tri-County area.

As the Public Health Emergency has ended, we've incorporated other public health information to keep our readers informed. In the new year, we'd love to hear from you about what topics spark your interest, and what topics you'd like to hear more about. Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson County Public Health Departments offer a wide range of services and programs to our residents, and are involved in lot of behind the scenes work aimed at keeping our region healthy and safe.

Complete this [quick poll](#) to let us know what you'd like to know about and how we can better serve you.

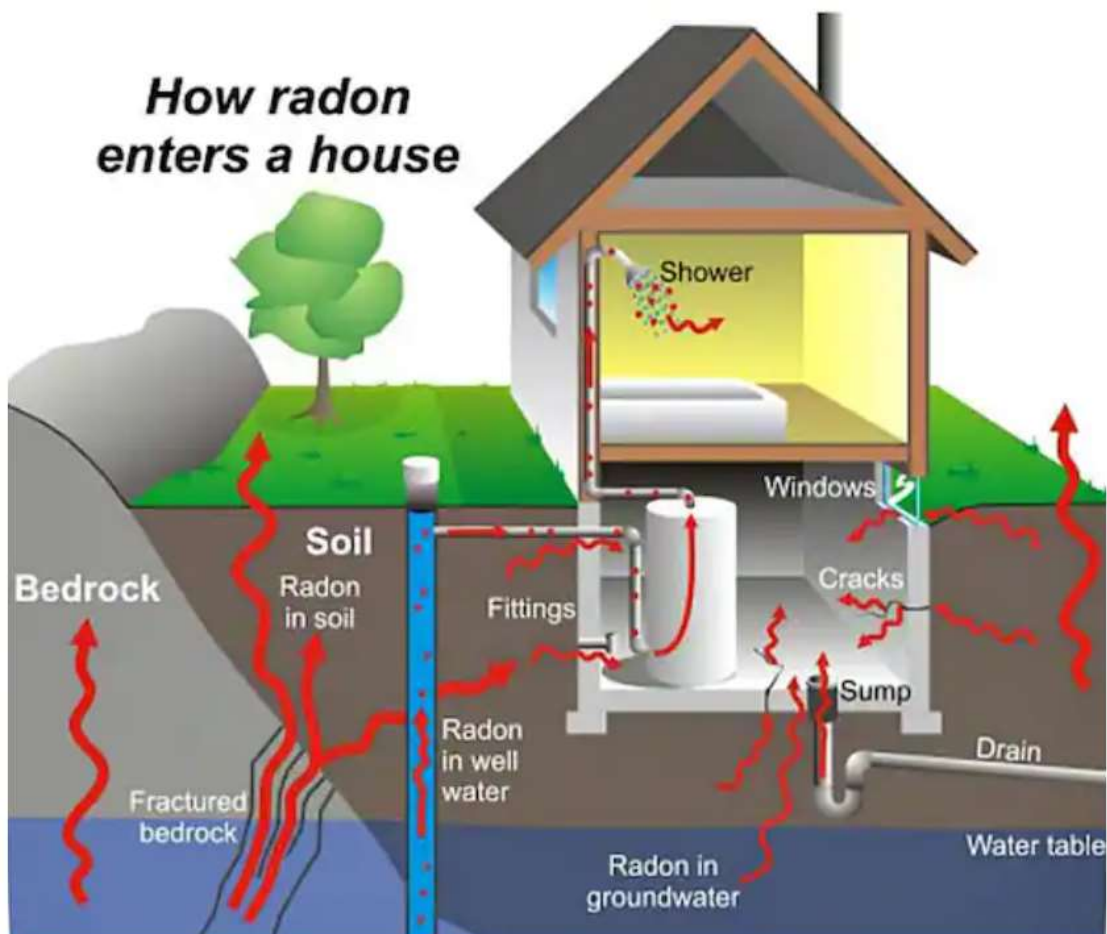
Here's to a healthy 2024 full of wellness and joy!

National Radon Action Month

The EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General urge all Americans to protect their health by testing their homes, schools, and other buildings for radon. Radon is a radioactive gas found in soil and rock. You can't see, smell, or taste radon, but it could be present at a dangerous level in your home. Radon gas moves up through the soil and can be drawn into your home. Once inside, radon becomes trapped and can build up to unsafe levels.

As you inhale radon gas, small particles get trapped in your lungs and damages your lung tissue. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers in America and claims the lives of about 21,000 Americans each year. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Testing radon levels can help prevent unnecessary exposure. If a high radon level is detected in your home, you can take steps to fix the problem to protect yourself and your family. The EPA's [A Citizen's Guide to Radon](#) is a great resource to checkout for complete information on risks of radon, testing, exposure levels, and how to rectify radon in your home.



Does Central Oregon have high levels of radon?

The only way to know whether your home has elevated radon levels is to test it. The geology for much of Eastern Oregon would suggest high risk, but unfortunately, not enough radon testing has been done to know the actual

risk. You should not assume that your home will have low/high radon levels based on the reported (or unreported) levels in your neighborhood.

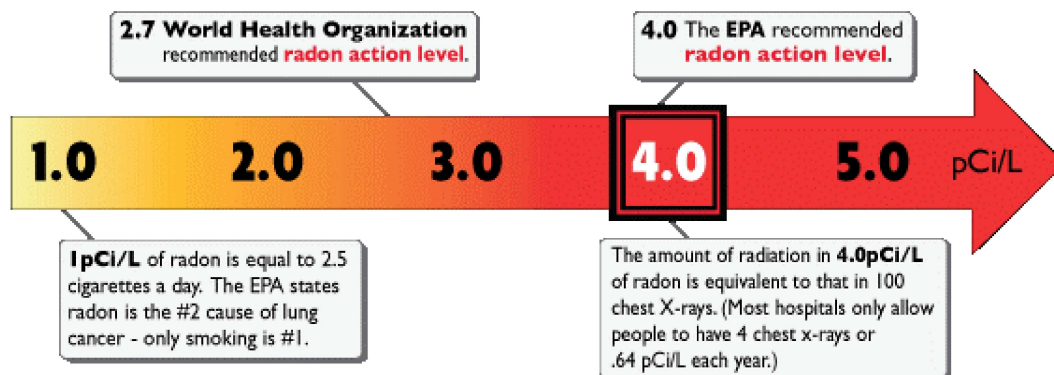
Can I test my home for elevated radon myself?

Testing your home is simple and inexpensive. Please see OHA's [Testing for Radon Gas](#) for information on radon testing. You can determine whether a short- or long-term test kit is right for you at [Types of Radon Gas Testing](#).

Kits can be found at hardware stores for \$15 to \$30. Check and see if the cost of the analysis is included in the test kit price or if there is an extra charge. You can also find test kits at either of the following:

- The [American Lung Association \(ALA\) of the Mountain Pacific](#) sells a short-term (ST) kit for \$18 and a long-term (LT) kit for \$30. You can order online or by phone at 503-718-6141.
- The [National Radon Program Services at Kansas State University \(sosradon.org\)](#) has short-term kits available for \$17 and long-term kits available for \$27 online.

TESTING: The only way to know if you have a radon problem



The EPA says radon poses a greater health risk to children than to adults.

Information Provided By:



How do I “fix” (or mitigate) elevated radon levels?

Reducing radon levels in your home typically involves hiring a radon mitigation contractor. The most common approach to mitigating a radon problem is called sub-slab depressurization or sub-slab suction. You can learn more about [residential radon mitigation](#) from EPA-funded National Radon Program Services.

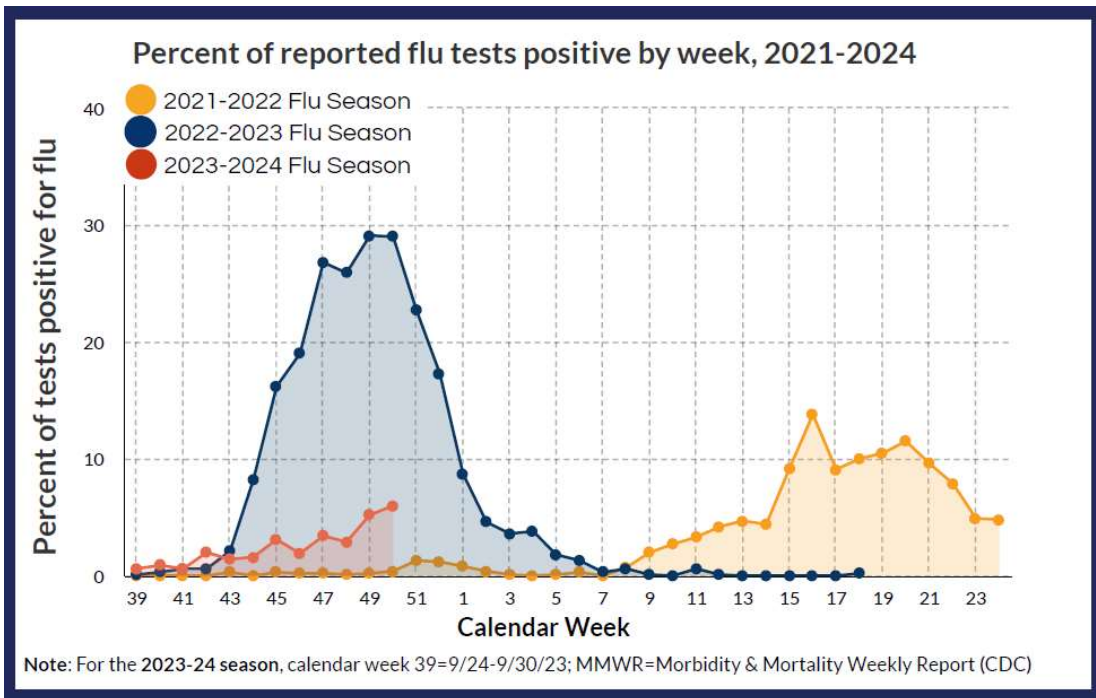
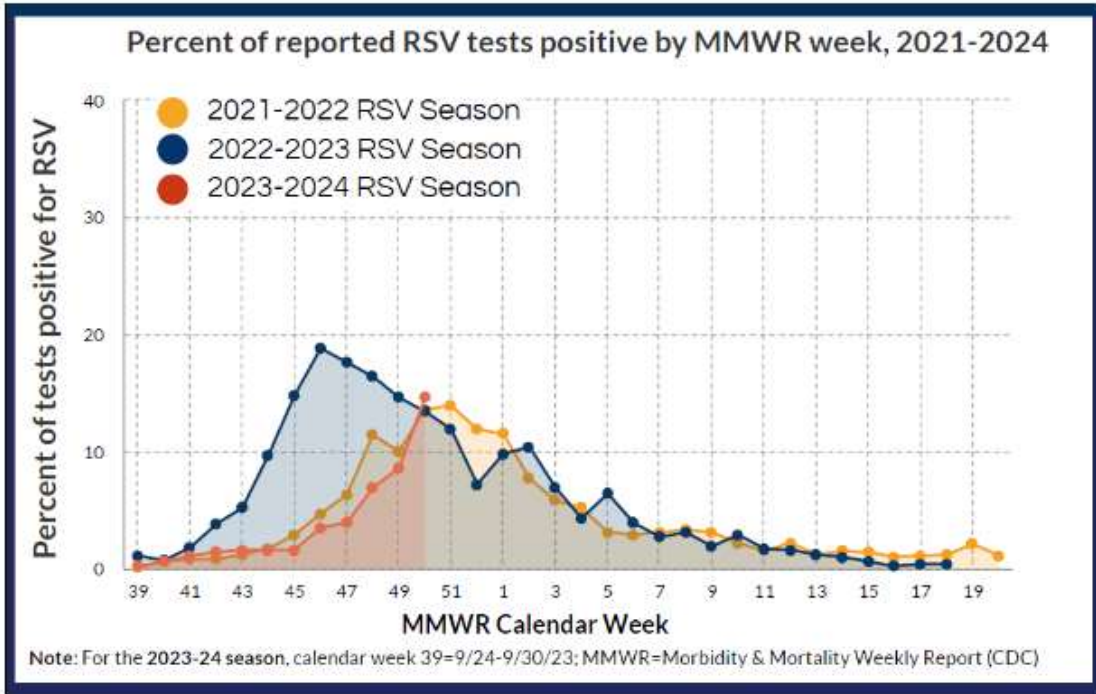
Is financial assistance available to help pay for radon mitigation?

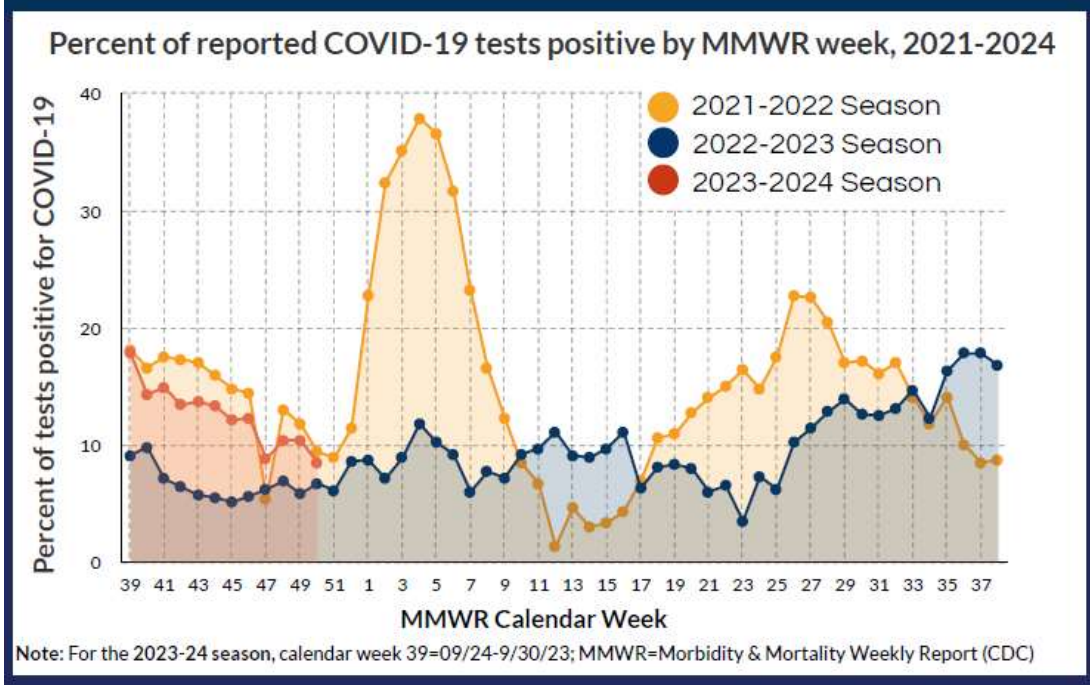
U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) offers the [Section 203\(k\) program](#) that may be used to finance radon mitigation systems. To locate an approved lender, search HUD's [Lender List](#) or call HUD's customer service at 1-800-225-5342.

You can also check with your employee health savings accounts (HSA) about whether they consider radon mitigation as a qualified medical expense.

Stay up to date on what is happening locally this respiratory season to help protect yourself and others from illness. Currently, our positive tests for RSV and Flu are increasing. Read the [full report](#) for more information.

Central Oregon COVID19, flu, and RSV reports are now available for our current respiratory season and posted weekly to our [Deschutes County website](#).





Public Health Resources:

- Central Oregon public health web resources:
 - [Crook County](#)
 - [Deschutes County](#)
 - [Jefferson County](#)

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