

Health Matters



from the Kane County Health Department

January 21, 2015

Trending Matters:

Test your home for Radon!



Radon test kits can be purchased at many local hardware stores (prices vary) and from the American Lung Association for \$12 by calling 1-800-LUNG USA.

They also are available at the Kane County Health Department and Kane County Development Department and the fee of \$15 includes both lab analysis and postage. **Below are the locations and times when test kits can be picked up:**

- Kane County Health Department
1240 N. Highland Ave. Suite 5
Aurora
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Kane County Health Department
1750 Grandstand Place
Elgin
Tuesdays 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- Kane County Development Dept.

January is National Radon Action Month

Illinois' geology to blame for higher levels of radon gas in our homes

Blame the unique geology in the Midwestern United States, and northeast Illinois in particular: Homes in Kane County have the potential for higher levels of radon. This is because the rocks and soil beneath our feet can contain uranium, which can produce radon, a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that occurs naturally from the breakdown of uranium. Radon has been found to be the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Radon gas can enter through cracks in homes/buildings/ schools and expose people to the radiation. And because our homes are typically shut up tight during cold winter days, any radon that enters your home will tend to linger much longer.



That is why January has been named National Radon Action Month, and the [Kane County Healthy Places Coalition](#), in conjunction with the Kane County Health Department, recommend that now is a good time to test your home for the presence of radon. Testing is the only way to know if your home has a high level of radon gas. Regardless of the year your home was built, you may have high levels of radon gas.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that if a home or building tests at 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher, action should be taken to reduce the level of radon. The average indoor radon level in Kane County is 5.07 pCi/L, according to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA).

719 S. Batavia Ave., 4th Floor
Geneva
Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Free test kits are available to those who are income eligible through Community Contacts, Inc. at (847) 697-8800.

Radon Contests

As part of January's National Radon Action Month, the Kane County Healthy Places Coalition and Kane County Health Department are promoting two contests for school-aged children to raise awareness of the dangers of radon.

Students have the opportunity to develop their art, science, and communication skills while also serving their community, and winners of the contests could win a cash prize and see their projects used in statewide and national radon awareness campaigns.

Click [HERE](#) for details.



It's never too late to get the flu shot. Flu activity is high across most of the country with flu illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths elevated. Flu season will probably continue for several weeks. For more information, visit our Flu page [HERE](#).

At least 44% of the buildings tested in Kane County have been found to exceed the 4 pCi/L standard. Residents can find the average radon level for homes in their ZIP code by clicking [HERE](#).

Information about radon test kits can be found in our "Trending Matters" column to the left.



Any radon level above 4 is considered high and it is recommended that steps be taken to reduce the levels through mitigation. Not only is it important to test your home for dangerous levels of radon, it is just as important to take steps to lower the levels, a procedure called "mitigation." The cost to mitigate a home averages about \$1,200 and is done by certified professionals. You can find a list of professionals in your area by visiting the [IEMA website](#).

The **Kane County Healthy Places Coalition** is formed by participants from diverse aspects of the community, including the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Kane County Health Department, municipal governments, hospitals, fire departments, community advocacy groups, non-profits, private corporations, and many others. The annual radon video and poster contests are now open. Please click [HERE](#) for more information.

For general radon information about radon, please visit our website by clicking [HERE](#), or calling the Kane County Health Department at 630-444-3040.

Home Visitation Collaborative helps parents and their children

Sara Gonzalez moved to America from Mexico some 16 years ago and she was alone and didn't speak English and was going to have a baby. Little did she know she was about to learn a lot about her baby, and about herself.

Sara was able to enroll in the Health Department's Nurse Family Partnership program Kane Kares, which is a program designed to help support women during pregnancy and parenting of the child and where a specially-trained Registered Nurse visits and supports the mom through the pregnancy and until the baby's second birthday.



Sara Gonzalez

This home visitation allowed Sara to become aware of the emotional part of being a mom, she says. For example, "It was not aware that I was supposed to have a pediatrician," she added.



The benefits of the home visitation programs in Kane County can now be found on one, bilingual website kanehomevisit.org. The parent-focused site provides first person video and written accounts of real-life moms in Kane County. Sara's story is just one of the several personal accounts, videos and testimony about the benefits of the home visitation programs to be found on the new website.

The website is the project of the entire **Kane County Home Visitation Collaborative**, which has worked collectively since 2000 to assure parents receive services. There are 15 home visit programs in Kane County following the 3 evidence-based models: Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, and Nurse Family Partnership.

When Sara was an expectant mom, the visiting nurse taught her that the baby could recognize her voice, and provided step by step guidance to help her through some difficult times. She also discovered that the baby was calmed by classical music, such as Beethoven and Mozart. She also learned that he liked foods that she didn't. "The foods I ate I didn't like," she says, but she continued to eat them for the sake of the baby.

"I started to have a relationship with my baby even though I couldn't see him, she says. Now her son is 16, and Sara is helping other families like she was helped so many years ago. After working in accounting and other duties for nine years, she is now an assistant training manager for Be Strong Families.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about Be Strong Families.



Another mother receives a home visit

The Kane Home Visits website will help parents-to-be, new parents and professionals alike find the programs that help parents guide their children to succeed in school and life. More information about the Kane Home Visits website can be found by visiting kanehomevisits.org or by calling **(630) 208-5150**.

Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA/CHIP)

KCHD, stakeholders and partners continue to see progress



Partners from all disciplines from across the county were invited and gathered in September 2014 for a full day to help develop KCHD's Community Health Assessment.

Work continues to move forward on the Kane County Health Department's Community Health Assessment (CHA) process. The Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA) report has been reviewed, edited, and finalized.

You can view the report on our website by clicking [HERE](#).

Thanks to everyone who participated at the September event or provided input along the way.

In addition, the **Forces of Change Assessment (FOCA)** has also been finalized. The report and Executive Summary can also be found on our CHIP webpage [HERE](#). We are highlighting both assessments through our Public Health Committee Flash Report, through social media, and also through this newsletter. If this email was forwarded to you and you don't already subscribe to *Health Matters*, you can do so easily [HERE](#).

PHOTOVOICE

Capturing a Healthy Kane County



Survey

Professional Research Consultants (PRC) has completed their survey of Kane County residents and a compilation of local data to create specialized reports for the hospitals and INC Board that they can use to learn more about the health issues in their service areas and prioritize strategies based on the available data. Individual reports are being mailed out to representatives for each group, and once the report for Kane County is complete we will put that on our website and email the group to let them know.

Asset Mapping

One current activity is Asset Mapping, which tries to map available resources in the county. Some examples of maps could be of the bike trails in the county, available farmland, parks, fitness centers, community gardens, healthcare centers, food pantries, farmers' markets, etc.

If you have any maps in your organization of Kane County that could be beneficial, please send an electronic copy to

EderDaniel@co.kane.il.us by

We have a new venue for the public to post photos of how they view health or health-related assets in the county. The PhotoVoice page is now up and running on Facebook [HERE](#). If you would like to participate, or know of any organizations or individuals that may want to provide photos of the community, they can be posted right to the Facebook page.

Those who are not registered to Facebook and have a great picture to submit can email it directly to ederdan@co.kane.il.us.

February 6. Even if you are not sure if it could be used, please send it anyway. We are collecting and compiling these asset maps but you may have something beneficial that could help improve this part of the assessment.



Website

kanehealth.com

Facebook

facebook.com/kanehealth

Twitter @KaneCoHealth

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Kane County,
Illinois**

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There is also a **Sign Up Form** on the page, for those who would like to be added to our email list to receive future *Health Matters* newsletters.