

# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

[geary.k-state.edu](http://geary.k-state.edu)

January 2022

## Ask the Agent

**Q:** My Medicare prescription plan premium took a big jump for 2022. Can I switch plans to reduce my monthly premium cost?

**A:** I wish I had better news but the answer is “not right now.” Medicare beneficiaries can change plans under two conditions. **One**—it’s Open Enrollment season. Open Enrollment Period (OEP) for changing prescription plans runs from October 15 thru December 7 each year. The only other time you can make a change is during a **Two**—Special Enrollment Period (SEP). Situations that warrant an SEP include:

1. You move
2. You lost your current coverage
3. You have the chance to get other coverage
4. Your plan changed its contract with Medicare
5. You qualify for Extra Help or other specific special situations

As a Senior Health Insurance Counselor of Kansas, I can work with you to answer many of your Medicare questions.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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## Safe At Home

January 2022

Each week, I write and record a program for our local radio station called Families Matter. I try to pick a theme each month and focus the brief weekly program on a target topic within that theme. The January 2022 theme was Hazards in Your Home and this newsletter carries that same theme.



Although I would like to think that my own home is safe, I recognize that there could be some hidden hazards that I may not be observing or thinking about. For example, when my husband and I bought a different house in the fall of 2020, one of the required inspections at our new home was a test for radon gas. Sure enough, the results of the test came back stating that the radon gas level in our home was four times higher than the maximum allowable rate. Before we could close on the house, and certainly before we could move in, an air quality technician placed a radon remediation system in our basement to keep the radon gas levels at bay.

January is National Radon Action Month which is promoted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its many partners. The aim of National Radon Action Month is to increase the public's awareness of radon, promote radon testing and mitigation, and advance the use of radon-resistant new construction practices.

Radon is an odor-free, tasteless, and invisible radioactive gas that occurs naturally in various parts of the United States. Many counties in Kansas have an average radon concentration that exceeds the maximum amount for safe human exposure. If the radon gas level is 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or more, your house is out of safe levels. (See Kansas Radon Fact Sheet insert.)

EPA explains how radon gas gets into our homes: *“It comes from the natural decay of uranium that is found in nearly all soils. It typically moves up through the ground to the air above and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation. Your home traps radon inside, where it can build up. This means new and old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements.”*

*Radon from soil gas is the main cause of radon problems. Sometimes radon enters the home through well water. In a small number of homes, the building materials can give off radon, too. However, building materials rarely cause radon problems by themselves.*

Why is radon awareness so important to homeowners? According to EPA estimates, **radon** is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Overall, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked.

For these reasons, the EPA recommends that homeowners test their living space for radon gas every two years. The Geary County K-State Research & Extension office keeps an inventory of radon test kits available to the public at a discounted price. Stop by our office at 119 E. 9th, Junction City, KS to purchase your radon test kit.

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Family & Consumer  
Sciences

### What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a tasteless, odorless, colorless gas that you cannot see or smell, but when breathed in high concentrations can cause death.



Even at low levels, carbon monoxide can make you sick. Carbon monoxide is produced by fuel burning or combustion appliances such as gas or oil furnaces and space heaters, gas dryers, gas water heaters, gas stoves, generators, wood stoves, and fireplaces.

Because carbon monoxide poisoning has the same symptoms as the flu, many people do not realize they have been exposed to high levels of the gas. However, this deadly gas can cause seizures, coma, brain damage, or death, so it is essential that you and your family treat combustion appliances with care.

### Action Steps to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

How can you prevent carbon monoxide exposure and poisoning? The following are action steps that you and your family can take to help keep you safe from this deadly gas.

1) Never use charcoal grills or run engines inside your home, garage, or basement even for a short time. Charcoal grills and small gasoline engines make a lot of carbon monoxide. Even opening all the windows and doors will not give you enough fresh air to prevent CO poisoning.

2) Never warm up a vehicle inside the garage. Warming up your car, truck, or motorcycle on a cold day for just a few minutes (even with the garage door open) can make enough CO to make you sick. Start lawnmowers and other lawn equipment outdoors.

3) Have a heating contractor check your furnace, chimneys, and other sources of CO every fall to make sure everything is okay. Make sure they use a tool that measures CO. To get harmful gases out of the home, many heating appliances have chimneys or vents. The chimney carries CO and other gases from the appliance to the outdoors. If your appliances and vents are working right, there should be little CO. If you rent, ask your landlord to have your heating system checked.

4) Make sure chimneys are in good shape – clean and working right. Have your chimney, wood-burning fireplace, or wood stove swept every year. Burning wood nearly always makes a lot of CO. It is very important that all the smoke goes out of the chimney.

5) If you use unvented kerosene or gas heaters or a vent-free fireplace, follow instructions carefully and open a window for fresh air. Do not use them while sleeping.

6) Put carbon monoxide alarms near each sleeping area and on each floor of your home.

7) Never use the kitchen stove or oven to heat your home.

8) Have the kitchen stove fixed before using it if the flames burn orange or yellow.

9) Don't use a smoking fireplace until you fix the problem.

Photo by [Hayden Scott](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Written By  
Dr. Sarah Kirby, State Program Leader for Family & Consumer Sciences  
& Professor Agricultural & Human Sciences  
NC State Extension, NC State University

### Concept of a healthy home:

"A healthy home is sited, designed, built, maintained, and renovated in ways that support the health of its residents." – U.S. Surgeon General, 2009

### Steps to a Healthy Home (SHH)

- 1) Keep It Clean
- 2) Keep It Contaminant-Free
- 3) Keep It Dry
- 4) Keep It Maintained
- 5) Keep It Pest-Free
- 6) Keep It Safe
- 7) Keep It Well-Ventilated

Which Step to a Healthy Home is each statement related to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Keeping food in air-tight storage containers and kitchen counters free of food particles will help you achieve this SHH.

\_\_\_\_\_ This SHH includes tasks like washing bedding, dusting surfaces, or sanitizing kitchen counters.

\_\_\_\_\_ During moderate weather, opening the windows to catch the cross-breeze can help with this SHH.

\_\_\_\_\_ Using childproof latches on your cleaning supplies cabinet promotes this SHH.

\_\_\_\_\_ This SHH requires that you get roof and plumbing leaks repaired quickly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Second-hand smoke, radon gas, and carbon monoxide are the targets for this SHH.

\_\_\_\_\_ To help you achieve this SHH, have your furnace inspected at least once per year and clean out your gutters and down spouts each spring and fall.

# SUDDENLY IN CHARGE:

## Home Safety Checklist



When caring for young children, it is important to be safe and healthy.

Fill out this checklist to the best of your ability. If you do not get something checked off, ask an adult for help. If there is no adult, do your best and check in with an adult when he or she is home.

### Home Safety Checklist

#### Security

- Keep home doors locked unless a safe word or password is given to you. (A safe word is like a password provided to you or others by responsible adults.)
- Access to phone with volume on.
- Practice social media safety. Do not share location or other details about children in your care.

#### Emergency

- Poison Control Number: 800-222-1222.
- Fill out and hang up Emergency Contact Sheet. (<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3495.pdf>)
- Check for working smoke alarms and carbon dioxide detector.
- Discuss tornado and fire plans.
  - Tornado shelter location:
  - Fire outdoor meeting location:

#### First Aid

- First-aid kit is located:
- Get clear instructions from an adult for giving children medicine (food allergies/medical/seasonal).
- Keep medicines and vitamins in a locked and/or high cabinet.

#### General Home Safety

- Place safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways.
- Put outlet covers on electrical outlets.
- Place mini-blind cords out of reach.
- Lock cabinets, oven, refrigerator, and windows.
- Keep cleaners stored in a locked and/or high cabinet.
- Know how to use appliances (dishwasher, microwave, stove, refrigerator/freezer, etc.).

## Young Children

- Keep small objects out of children's reach and sight.
- Never leave children alone around water (bath, pool, etc.).
- Know what areas are off limits to children (parents' room, workshop, basement, etc.)
- Keep toys and soft bedding out of a baby's crib.
- Get directions on how and what to feed young children.  
For example: cut grapes, hot dogs, apples, etc. into small pieces.

## Items to Discuss

- Home security features.
- Knowledge of firearms in home.
- Know about animal safety in the home and outside the home.
- Check outdoor play area for hazards (pond, traffic, railroad track, lawn equipment, etc.).
- Know safety rules for outdoor activities (bike helmet, areas off limits, etc.).

Scan the QR code for more "Suddenly in Charge" tip sheets and connect with your local K-State Research and Extension office.



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**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and  
Cooperative Extension Service**

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# Food Safety

Excerpts from the **You Asked It!** monthly Food Safety authored by *Karen Blakeslee, M.S.* —  
K-State Research & Extension Rapid Response Center

## What is Clostridium Perfringens?

Clostridium perfringens bacteria are one of the most common causes of foodborne illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates these bacteria cause nearly 1 million illnesses in the United States every year.

With soup season upon us, these large batches of thick hot food can be trouble. If the soup is not held above 140°F or not chilled to below 40°F in small batches, then the potential for C. perfringens growth increases. If this bacteria makes spores, which act like a protective coating to help bacteria survive, food held between 40-140°F will allow the bacteria to grow. It can produce a toxin which can cause foodborne illness symptoms such as diarrhea. Illness can occur within 6 to 24 hours after eating contaminated food.

Prevention steps include cooking soups, whole roasts and whole poultry to safe temperatures. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Refrigerate leftovers, divided into shallow containers, within two hours after cooking. Reheat leftovers to 165°F before serving.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Prevent Illness from C. perfringens](#).

## After a Food Recall...

Food recalls occur about every day. Most you don't hear about or may not affect your grocery stores. In the event you have purchased food that has been recalled, it is important to prevent cross-contamination by cleaning.

First, remove the recalled food from your storage location. Throw it away per instructions in the recall notice, or take it back to the store for a refund. Many stores will contact you about a recall or you may see a notice on your store receipt.

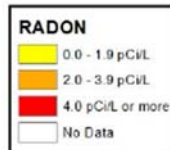
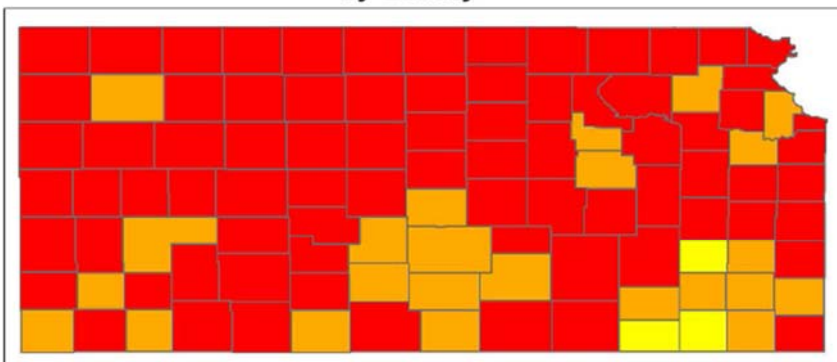
Clean counters, cabinets and refrigerator drawers and shelves. Use hot soapy water where possible. Then sanitize with a simple bleach solution of 1 tablespoon liquid bleach in 1 gallon of water. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a step-by-step guide to clean your refrigerator. You can access the guide at: <https://bit.ly/recallcleanup>

Don't forget to wash your hands after cleaning and especially after handling recalled food. Wash any towels and washcloths in hot soapy water before using them again. Learn more about Recalls and Outbreaks from [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov)



Congratulations to Lois Strauss for winning last month's reader appreciation award! She will receive a K-State mug and spoon. Keep your eyes open for this opportunity again in a future newsletter! Photo by [Tetiana Padurets](#) on [Unsplash](#)

2019 Kansas Radon Average Values  
by County



## Kansas Radon Program Quick Facts

Radon-induced lung cancer is the #1 cause of death in homes. 1 in 4 Kansas homes has high levels of radon.

Kansas law requires that all radon testing performed during real estate transactions be conducted by state-certified radon professionals. The list of certified professionals is at [www.kansasradonprogram.org](http://www.kansasradonprogram.org).

The only way to know the radon level anywhere is to test. Radon test kits can be purchased at many county extension offices including Geary County.

Radon mitigation systems will reduce radon to below 4.0 pCi/L in 95% or more of homes.

Go to [www.kansasradonprogram.org](http://www.kansasradonprogram.org) or call 1-800-693-5343 for more information.

**Geary County**

P.O. Box 28  
119 E. 9th Street  
Junction City, KS 66441

**Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs**

**\*\*Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register\*\***

**January, 2022**

24, 31 Healthy Together Meals—Hosted by Live Well Geary County at the Larry Dixon Center, 920 W. 6th, Junction City from 5:30 –6:30pm. *Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Geary County, we have suspended in-person dining. We are offering drive-thru "to go" meals at the front door of the center. Send an email to [livewellgearycounty@gmail.com](mailto:livewellgearycounty@gmail.com) to reserve your meal(s) each Monday by noon. Advance reservations are encouraged but not required.*

**February 2022**

7, 14, 21, 28 Healthy Together Meals—Hosted by Live Well Geary County at the Larry Dixon Center, 920 W. 6th, Junction City from 5:30 –6:30pm. Free hot and healthy meals offered to seniors. For more information on this communal meal site and others, go to: <https://www.livewellgearycounty.org/community-meals>. *Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Geary County, we have suspended in-person dining. We are offering drive-thru "to go" meals at the front door of the center. Send an email to [livewellgearycounty@gmail.com](mailto:livewellgearycounty@gmail.com) to reserve your*

21 Quick Meals for Busy Families III—Back by demand! We are offering a free 4-session nutrition and food preparation class beginning in February. Look for the registration link to be posted on our website at: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/> and our Facebook page on January 21 at: <https://www.facebook.com/gearycountyextension/>



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