



What Are the Dangers of Granite Counter Tops?

By Tyler Lacoma, eHow Contributor

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Granite counters can be a source of radon and bacteria.

Granite countertops are a popular countertop material option. They are durable, extremely heat resistant, and of high quality. However, several problems are also associated with granite countertops. These are not common issues, but they do tend to occur more with granite countertops than other types of stone or other materials, due to granite's unique geological composition.

Bacteria

Granite, especially natural granite or granite tiles that have not been fully sealed, can easily absorb water and are an excellent habitat for growing bacteria. This makes it more likely that a granite countertop can host bacteria and spread bacteria to other surfaces, including food and skin. Not all bacteria are harmful, but with absorbent granite that is not regularly cleaned, the chances of spreading dangerous bacteria are higher. Homeowners should make sure to sanitize their granite countertops.

Radon

There is also a worry that granite countertops may produce what is known as radon gas. This is a radioactive gas that is present in small amounts throughout all types of soil in water. In sealed houses, however, radon can collect and affect air quality, increasing the risk of lung cancer. Granite countertops have been known to emit radon, sometimes high amounts. This is rare and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not believe enough granite counters do this to require industry changes, but concerned homeowners can order a radon test on their granite.

Gamma Radiation

In addition to radon, some granite counters also produce gamma radiation. This poses a more difficult problem for homeowners. Gamma radiation can also cause cancer, but based on exposure levels for individuals. While gamma tests can test how much radiation the granite surface is producing, they cannot judge how much radiation people in the house are being exposed to, which makes it difficult to judge the dangers. Like radon, high levels of gamma radiation in granite counters are very rare.