



## Long-lived alpha emitters concentrations in the spices consumed in Iraq using CR-39 detector

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### Abstract

Spices are mainly used as additives to diets in different countries, including our country, so it is necessary to ensure that they are free of radioactive substances harmful to human health. This research aimed to measure the concentrations of alpha emitters, and measure the annual effective dose AED resulting from the intake of radon. The CR-39 detector used to measure radon, radium, and uranium concentrations in the 24 spices samples selected from markets. In this work the radon concentrations in the samples were found to vary from 65.102 to 195.30 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> with 126.47 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> a mean value, this mean value is a small amount over 100 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> the reference level limits of the World Health Organization (WHO), below 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> of the UK Board of National Radiation Protection (NRPB) limits and below the level of the European Recommendation Commission. The annual radon effective dose varied between 1.642-4.927 mSv/y which is within the range of 0.2-10 mSv/y of (UNSCEAR). Radium contents vary between 0.446-1.367 Bq/Kg with 0.943 Bq/Kg as a mean value. The range of uranium activity concentrations is between 4.408-13.520 Bq/Kg with a mean value of 9.322 Bq/Kg. This work identified and measured the specified concentrations of radionuclide present in spices showed that spices are safe for consumption.

**Keywords:** Radium content, radon Dose effective, CR-39 detector, spices, Uranium.

### Introduction

Spices refer to products that are added to the food in order to give it a flavor, taste, and smell delicious and likable to everyone, as it opens appetite and there are many benefits the human body and protect people from most diseases, which is the fruits of some food grains and also some herbs, stems, bark and leaf trees Grain and seeds some flowers and cut from the roots of some trees. They are often dry and are very good sources of antioxidants. They are used in most foods. They also help to kill microbes and fungi. They also resist food poisoning. Spices are mainly used as additives to diets in different countries, including our country, so it is necessary to ensure that they are free of radioactive substances harmful to human health

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The radioactive materials are the unstable element nuclei, were exposed the nucleus to corrosion by emitting radiation types such as alpha, beta and gamma particles, and sooner or later becomes more stable element nuclei. This process is called radioactivity or radiation decay [1]. Human exposure to radioactive elements faces a high risk, which has health risks that affect their lives and maybe reflected in future generations. The damage to the human body from the radioactive elements depends on certain factors, the nature of the radioactive material and the type of radiation and the time the body is exposed to these radiations [2]. Radioactive substances when they enter the body of any pathway, are absorbed and introduced into biochemical basic processes and access to blood circulation and body fluids, to all body tissues are distributed according to the properties of the element [3]. The control of the effects of exposure to internal radiation depends on many factors, the most important of which is the slow development and appearance of radiation effect, the heterogeneity of radiation dose absorption in tissues with the time required for the degradation of radioactive material to give cumulative dose over time, the chemical toxicity level of the radioactive element itself, On the human body with self-injurious physical effects or effects on cells of body, symptoms or same organism appeared effects when exposed to radiation, the genetic effects of radiation, and the effects that appear in the offspring of an organism due to damage Genital organ exposed to radiation. [4], [5]. In living organisms radioactivity is due to the presence of several radioactive elements in the organism's body, such as radium, uranium, and radon. These elements fatal if consumed. They may lead to damage and malfunction in the bones, kidneys, the radon is an important element that can cause lung cancer as in the case of dissolved solubility or inhalation in a gaseous form. [6]. The passive sealed can with the CR-39 detector technique used in radioactive measure uranium and radium and the spice samples.

## Material and Methods

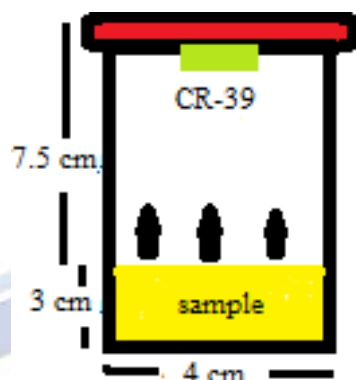
Twenty four samples were collected from most used spices, these samples are different weights because their density is different, but they have the same volume, filled inside a plastic sealed-can cylindrical container (diffusion chamber 4 cm in diameter, 10.5 cm in length) CR-39 track detector facing, 7.5 cm is the sample to the detector surface distance, 3 cm is the sample thickness. The detectors after 60 days etched by NaOH at 6.25 N normality and heat 70 C° for 8 hours in a water bath. The detectors dried after washing in water, by a microscope at 400x a magnification tracks counted.

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**Figure 1.** The schematic diagram of a sealed-can technique for spice samples.

The spice samples radon gas concentration calculated using the equation [7], [8].

$$\rho = \frac{\text{Total number of tracks}}{\text{Area of the field of view}} \quad (1)$$

The radon activity concentration  $C_{Rn}$  (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>) related to the density of tracks  $\rho$  (Track/cm<sup>2</sup>) and the exposure time  $T$  (days) by equation [9].

$$C_{Rn} = \rho / KT \quad (2)$$

Where CR-39 calibration factor is  $K$ , its value (0.04965 Traks.cm<sup>-2</sup>.day<sup>-1</sup> / Bq.m<sup>-3</sup>) calculated by the equation [10], [11].

$$K = \frac{1}{4} r \left( 2 \cos \theta_c - \frac{r}{R_i} \right) \quad (3)$$

Where  $\theta_c$  is the critical angle of CR-39 which equals 35°,  $r$  is the radius of the sealed can (2 cm),  $R_i$  is the range of alpha in the air (4.09 cm for radon) calculated by [12].

$$R_i = 0.318 E_i^{3/2} \quad (4)$$

Where  $E_i$  is the alpha particle emitted energy from radon 5.49 MeV. The concentration of radon in the samples calculated using the equation [13].

$$C_s = \lambda_{Rn} C_{Rn} H T / L \quad (5)$$

Where  $C_s$  is the concentration of radon in the spices sample (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>),  $C_{Rn}$  is the concentration of air space Radon (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>),  $\lambda_{Rn}$  is the constant of decay for Radon (0.1814 day<sup>-1</sup>), in the can the height of air space is  $H$  (7.5 cm), the time of exposure is  $T$  (60 days), and the thickness of the sample is  $L$  (3cm) in the can.

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The sample effective Radium content calculated by formula [14], [15].

$$C_{Ra} (Bq.Kg^{-1}) = \left( \frac{\rho}{KT_e} \right) \left( \frac{HA}{M} \right) \quad (6)$$

Where the mass of sample  $M$  is in Kg,  $A$  in  $m^2$  is the cross-section area of the sealed can, the distance between the detector and top surface of spices sample is  $H$  in meter,  $T_e$  is time effective exposure in day calculated by the formula:

$$T_e = [T - \lambda_{Rn}^{-1} (1 - e^{-\lambda_{Rn} T})] \quad (7)$$

The spices radon activity  $A_{Rn}$  calculated through relation [16], [17].

$$A_{Rn} = C_s V \quad (8)$$

Where  $A_{Rn}$  the radon activity,  $V$  the spices volume ( $V = \pi r^2 L$ ) =  $37.68 \times 10^{-6} m^3$ ,  $r$  is a radius of the can. The atoms number of the radon  $N_{Rn}$  determined by the relation:

$$A_{Rn} = \lambda_{Rn} N_{Rn} \quad (11)$$

By the secular equilibrium (the activity of radon equal the activity of uranium) uranium atom number in the samples can be calculated  $N_U$  from:

$$\lambda_U N_U = \lambda_{Rn} N_{Rn} \quad (12)$$

Where  $\lambda_U$  is the decay constant of uranium ( $4.883 \times 10^{-18} sec^{-1}$ ), then the weight of uranium in the spices samples calculated from:

$$W_U = N_U a_U / N_{avo.} \quad (13)$$

Where  $a_U$  is the mass number of uranium  $^{238}U$ ,  $N_{avo.}$  Avogadro constant ( $6.02 \times 10^{23}$  atom/mol). The concentration of uranium, then calculated by

$$C_U = W_U / W_s \quad (14)$$

Where  $C_U$  is the concentration of uranium in (ppm) unit, the sample's mass  $W_s$  is used in gram (differ from sample to another listed in table 1.).

The activity concentration of uranium in units of ( $Bq.Kg^{-1}$ ) will be.

$$Ac_U = \lambda_U N_{avo.} [a_U]^{-1} C_U \quad (15)$$

Where  $C_U$  must be in units of (g/Kg) (since  $1ppm = 10^{-6} g/g = 10^{-3} g/Kg$ ).

The annual radon effective dose  $D_{eff}$  (mSv/y) calculated from [18].

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$$D_{eff} = C_{Rn} OF T_y D \quad (16)$$

Where  $C_{Rn}$  the concentration of radon (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>), F is an equilibrium factor 0.4, and O is the occupancy factor its value 0.8,  $T_y$  (8760 h.y<sup>-1</sup>) hours is a time of one year, and D is the conversion factor (9×10<sup>-6</sup> mSv.h<sup>-1</sup>(Bq.m<sup>-3</sup>)<sup>-1</sup>) [19].

## Results and Discussion

The results of the measurements are listed in (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Samples, samples weight, track density, Radon concentration, radon annual effective dose, radium concentration, and uranium activity concentration.

No.	Samples	Samp. weight gm	$\rho$ Track /cm <sup>2</sup>	$C_{Rn}$ Bq/m <sup>3</sup>	$Rn D_{eff}$ mSvy <sup>-1</sup>	$C_{Ra}$ Bq/kg	$C_U$ Bq/kg
1	Latency	14.81	581.81	195.30	4.927	1.367	13.520
2	Ginger	17.14	363.63	122.06	3.079	0.738	7.301
3	Lemon Dozy	28.21	424.24	142.41	3.592	0.523	5.175
4	Curry	15.16	327.27	109.85	2.771	0.751	7.429
5	Coriander	11.25	400	134.27	3.387	1.238	12.236
6	Darcin	16.51	424.24	142.41	3.592	0.894	8.843
7	Turshi Spices	12.67	460.60	154.61	3.900	1.265	12.511
8	Black pepper	14.27	533.33	179.03	4.516	1.301	12.862
9	Paprika	14.14	303.03	101.72	2.566	0.746	7.375
10	Hill	11.09	387.87	130.20	3.284	1.217	12.037
11	Anba Spices	21.95	315.15	105.79	2.669	0.499	4.941
12	White pepper	18.64	460.60	154.61	3.900	0.860	8.504
13	Sweet pill	14.45	290.90	97.653	2.463	0.701	6.928
14	Turmeric	16.02	315.15	105.79	2.669	0.684	6.770
15	Red pepper	12.82	484.84	162.75	4.106	1.316	13.016
16	Black pill	15.51	436.36	146.47	3.695	0.979	9.682
17	Anise	15.14	193.93	65.102	1.642	0.446	4.408
18	Oregano	10.6	351.51	117.99	2.976	1.154	11.413
19	Summak	13.8	375.75	126.13	3.182	0.948	9.371
20	Rosemary	8.73	230.30	77.308	1.950	0.918	9.079
21	Saffron	9.48	278.78	93.584	2.361	1.023	10.121
22	Hawaij Clegga	15.06	363.63	122.06	3.079	0.840	8.310
23	Basra num	11.58	327.27	109.85	2.771	0.984	9.726
24	Chicken Spices	11.65	412.12	138.34	3.490	1.231	12.174
	Min			65.102	1.642	0.446	4.408
	Max			195.30	4.927	1.367	13.520
	Mean			126.47	3.190	0.943	9.322

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The calculated concentration of radon activity values are in the range 65.102-195.30 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, a mean value of 126.47 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>. The concentration of radon mean value is a small amount over the reference level of the World Health Organization (WHO) limits of 100 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, below 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> limits of the UK Board of National Radiation Protection (NRPB) and below the level of the European Recommendation Commission. The annual radon effective dose varied between 1.642-4.927 mSv/y, which is within the range 0.2-10 mSv/y of (UNSCEAR) with 3.190 mSv/y of a mean value. Radium contents vary between 0.446-1.367 Bq/Kg with 0.943 Bq/Kg as a mean value, comparing with the other available researches its agreement with the results of 0.81 Bq/Kg in Ghana estimated in reference [22]. The range of uranium activity concentrations is between 4.408-13.520 Bq/Kg with a mean value of 9.322 Bq/Kg its in the range when compared with a mean value of 2.19 Bq/Kg in Nigeria from reference [23]. The minimum values in the sample no. 17 Anise was found, and max values in sample no. 1 Latency. (Figure. 2) Represents the effective radon annual dose with the sample variance.

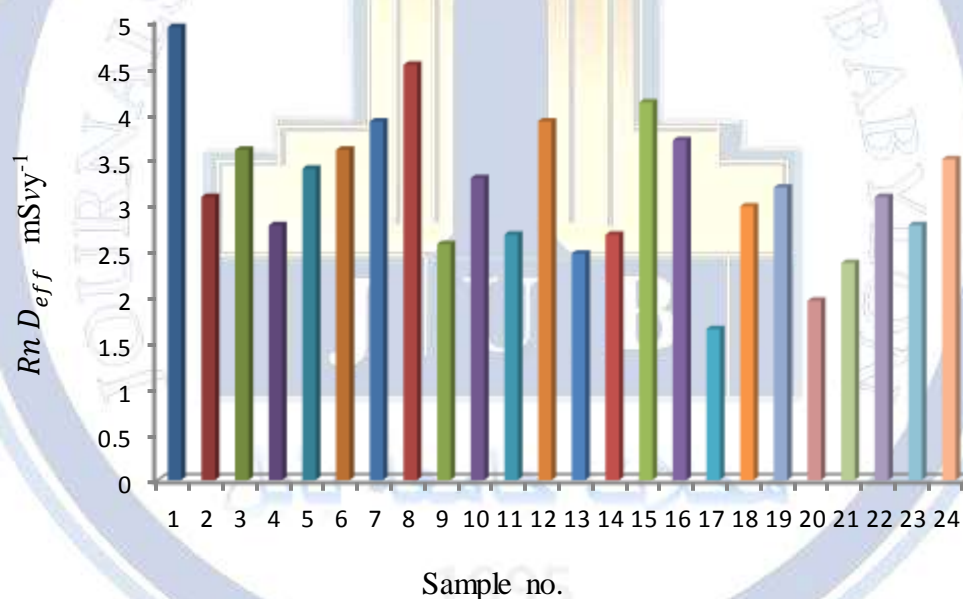
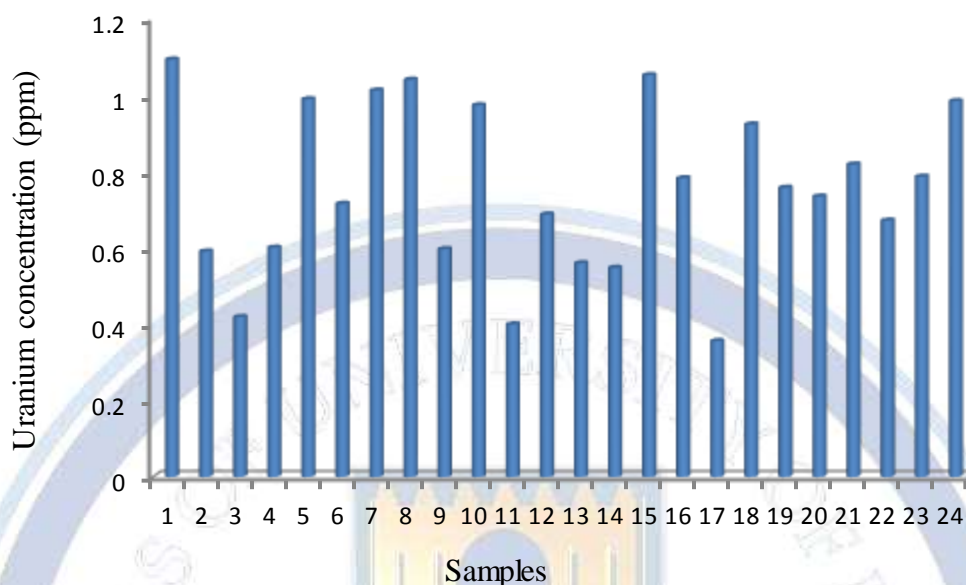


Figure 2. Samples radon annual effective dose.

The variance of uranium concentration with the samples in (Figure 3).





**Figure 3.** Uranium concentrations in samples.

The results show the sample's radiation concentrations are low and within the low radiation background limit. The important contributors corresponding to other radionuclides occurring naturally, such as  $^{226}\text{Ra}$  isotopes,  $^{238}\text{U}$  being lower magnitude an order. For this decay-series radionuclide, the series of uranium, isotopes of the radium are the dietary contamination source and the serious internal radiation to man. In the uranium series, most of the particles of alpha are from radium emitted and its daughter, spices all the samples have a high contribution to the ingestion consumer doses. Uptake patterns of crops have widely different from soil to plant harvest, due to variations of the transfer factor of their radionuclide for the pathway of soil-plant-spices. Longer storage and processing times can reduce the activity contents of radionuclides in foodstuffs. The removal efficiency of the radionuclide through plant product processing varies widely and up to 99% the initial activity remove in the row of material. The surface washing efficiency or cleaning of the plant is low and gives an initial activity reduction [24].

## Conclusions

The calculated concentration of radon activity values are in the range 65.102-195.30 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, a mean value of 126.47 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>. The concentration of radon mean value is a small amount over the reference level of the World Health Organization (WHO) limits of 100 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, below 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> limits of the UK Board of National Radiation Protection (NRPB) and below the level of the European Recommendation Commission. The annual radon effective dose varied between 1.642-4.927 mSv/y, which is within the range 0.2-10 mSv/y of (UNSCEAR) with 3.190 mSv/y of a mean value. Radium

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#### Conflict of Interests.

There are non-conflicts of interest

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## الخلاصة

البهارات تستخدم كإضافات على الطعام في مختلف البلدان ، من ضمنها بلدنا ، لذا من الضروري التأكد من خلوها من المواد المشعة الضارة بصحة الإنسان. هدف هذا البحث كان قياس تراكيز باعقات الفا ، وقياس الجرعة السنوية الفعالة AED الناتجة من تناول الرادون. استخدم كاشف CR-39 في قياس تراكيز الرادون ، الراديوم واليورانيوم في 24 عينة من البهارات المختارة من الاسواق. تراكيز الرادون وجد في هذا البحث تتغير من 65.102 الى  $195.30 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  وقيمة متوسطة  $126.47 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  وهذه القيمة هي اعلى بقليل من  $100 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  المستوى او الحدود المقبولة من منظمة الصحة العالمية (WHO) واقل من  $200 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  التي هي حدود اللوائح البريطانية للوقاية من الاشعاع (NRPB) والاوربية. الجرعة السنوية الفعالة للرادون تراوحت بين 1.642 - 4.927 mSv/y التي هي ضمن المدى 0.2 - 10 mSv/y للجنة الامم المتحدة لاثار الاشعاع الذري (UNSCEAR). تراكيز الراديوم تغيرت بين 0.446 -  $1.367 \text{ Bq/Kg}$  بمتوسط  $0.943 \text{ Bq/Kg}$ . وتراكيز فعالية اليورانيوم كانت في المدى 4.408 -  $13.520 \text{ Bq/Kg}$  وقيمة متوسطة  $9.322 \text{ Bq/Kg}$ . هذا العمل قاس التراكيز المحددة للمواد المشعة الموجودة في البهارات وبين ان هذه البهارات آمنة للتناول.

الكلمات الدالة: محتوى الراديوم، جرعة الرادون الفعالة، كاشف CR-39، البهارات، اليورانيوم.