



Lung Cancer Fact Sheet



About Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer and the second-leading cause of cancer death in the US. There are different kinds of lung cancer. The two most common types are non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and small cell lung cancer (SCLC).

Risk Factors

Smoking is, by far, the leading cause of lung cancer. But not all people with lung cancer smoke. Some may be former smokers, and some people with lung cancer have never smoked at all.

Some risk factors for lung cancer can be changed. These include smoking tobacco, breathing in secondhand smoke from tobacco users, or being exposed to certain cancer-causing chemicals like radon and asbestos.

Other risk factors cannot be changed. These include: a person's age and their personal or family history, being treated with radiation therapy to the lungs in the past, or being exposed to outdoor air pollution.

Prevention

Not all lung cancers can be prevented, and some people who have lung cancer do not have any clear risk factors. But there are ways a person can help lower their risk:

- Avoid all tobacco products.
- Stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Keep cars and homes smoke-free.
- Avoid or limit exposure to chemicals that may be in the home or workplace. Testing can be done in buildings to check for these chemicals.
- Follow a healthy eating pattern that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Screening

The American Cancer Society recommends screening for certain people at a high risk for lung cancer. If a person is a current or former smoker **ages 55 to 74** and in fairly good health, they might benefit from screening for lung cancer with a yearly low-dose CT scan (LDCT). Talk to a health care provider for more information about the possible benefits, limits, and harms of lung cancer screening.

Signs and Symptoms

Most lung cancers do not cause symptoms until they have spread outside the lungs. Some common signs and symptoms of lung cancer might include:

- A cough that does not go away or gets worse
- Coughing up blood or rust-colored spit or phlegm
- Chest pain that is often worse with deep breathing, coughing, or laughing
- Hoarseness
- Loss of appetite
- Unexplained weight loss
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Feeling tired or weak
- Infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia that don't go away or keep coming back

Treatment

Treatment for lung cancer depends on the type and stage of the cancer, special testing that might be done on the tumor, as well as the person's age, other health problems, and personal choices. People who are diagnosed with lung cancer should discuss all treatment options and make informed treatment decisions together with their doctors.

Living With Lung Cancer

From the time a person is diagnosed with lung cancer, their quality of life is affected in some way. Different physical, social, psychological, spiritual, and financial issues can come up at any time during the cancer experience and after treatment is over.

Some types of lung cancers can be serious. Palliative care is focused on improving the quality of life and dealing with issues that people living with a serious illness might have. People with advanced lung cancer may benefit from having palliative care at any time from the point of diagnosis, throughout treatment, and beyond.

Good communication between a person with cancer and the health care team is important and involves:

- Asking and answering questions
- Working together to set care goals
- Making shared decisions
- Managing side effects and other issues
- Making sure to schedule follow-up tests and care

To learn more, visit www.cancer.org/cancer/lung-cancer.html.



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