

CONNECTING FOR LUNG HEALTH: LUNG CANCER SCREENING



Learn About Lung Cancer Screening

Lung cancer is a disease where cells in the lungs grow out of control. It is the second most common cancer in the United States, after skin cancers. The goal of a screening test is to diagnose a disease early, so it can be treated more successfully. That is why it is so important to get screened, especially if you are at higher than average risk. This fact sheet will help you understand if lung cancer screening is right for you. It will provide some answers about how to get a screening and talk to your doctor.

Research shows that lung cancer is more common in Black and African American men compared to other populations. The chance of being diagnosed late, and to dying from it are also higher. Some health disparities contribute to the differences in these statistics. “Health care disparities” means that there are differences in access to care for certain groups of people. These differences could be based on many factors. These include race, gender, income or location. This fact sheet suggests things you can do to reduce these barriers to care.



Find a Doctor You Trust

It is not always easy to put your health in the hands of doctors you do not know well. For Black or African American individuals, this can sometimes be a difficult process. Both personal experience and historical events can make it harder to find a doctor you trust. Many people find it easier to talk to a doctor who is supportive and understanding.

Talk with friends and family members or other people you trust about finding a doctor they would recommend. This could be a doctor who is also a person of color. It can also be someone who has a history of providing excellent care. When you feel understood by your doctor, you will have better outcomes. They can also help you gain better access to critical health care, such as screening.



Be Your Strongest Advocate

Don't be afraid to ask for what you need from your doctor. It might feel embarrassing or awkward to talk about personal health concerns like lung cancer. Other times, it may feel like your doctor is not hearing what you are telling them. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help. It is the only way to ensure your good health in the long-term.

For Black and African American people, feeling dismissed by your doctor is a common concern. Speaking up for yourself is not always easy, but it can make a difference. Being open with your doctor can help you understand your risk for lung cancer. This includes asking questions. If you feel you are not getting the best care, consider changing providers or seeking a second opinion.



Talk About Your Concerns

Fears related to screening or lung cancer are not uncommon. There is also some stigma surrounding lung cancer, especially for smokers. Stigma is a sense of judgment or negative feeling about an activity or behavior. Feeling like you are to blame for your health concerns can make it hard to talk about. These worries could delay getting the screening you need.

When you and your doctor can talk openly, this helps ease feelings of embarrassment or guilt. Getting screened for lung cancer is nothing to be ashamed of and is a very common test. If you do have lung cancer, it is best to know so you can take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself allows you to better be able to take care of others, too.



Learn More About Lung Cancer Screening

Your doctor can tell you more about the benefits of screening. When lung cancer is found early, there is a better chance of treatment being successful. This has great benefits and increases survival rates, giving you the best chance of continuing to live a long, full life. Speak to your doctor to learn about your risks and the value of screening.

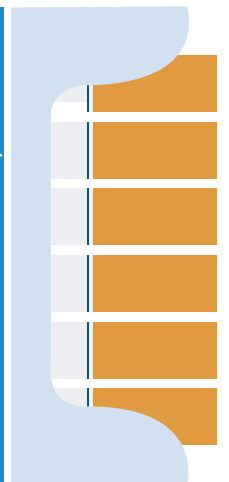
Screening is recommended for adults aged 50 to 80 years who have a 20 pack-year smoking history and currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years.

A pack-year is a term your doctor will use to determine the numbers of cigarettes smoked. If you have smoked a pack a day for the last 20 years, this equals 20 pack-years. If you smoke two packs a day for 10 years, this is also the same as 20 pack-years, because it is the same number of cigarettes. If you have 20 pack-years or more, screening is usually recommended.

CALCULATING A "PACK-YEAR"

$$\begin{array}{rcc} 1 & \times & 20 = 20 \\ \text{PACK} & & \text{YEARS} & & \text{PACK-} \\ \text{A DAY} & & & & \text{YEARS} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{rcc} 2 & \times & 10 = 20 \\ \text{PACKS} & & \text{YEARS} & & \text{PACK-} \\ \text{A DAY} & & & & \text{YEARS} \end{array}$$



Screening is done with an imaging test called low-dose computed tomography (LDCT). This test creates images of the inside of your body and lungs in just a few minutes. It can see if lung cancer might be present and whether it is growing.

The screening may detect growths in the tissue of the lungs. Smaller growths might not mean lung cancer is present. Larger growths are more likely cancerous. These often require a lung specialist to investigate further. Screening may also indicate other lung issues, such as emphysema or the hardening of arteries. Your doctor will discuss your results with you. Even if no growths are found, future screening may be recommended to make sure your lungs stay clear.

For more information about lung cancer and screening, contact your health care professional.

For more information, visit cancer.org/lunghealth

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