

Lung Cancer Screening

What is It?

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, causing more deaths than breast, prostate and colorectal cancers combined. Results of the National Lung Screening Trial showed that screening current and former heavy smokers with low-dose CT scans reduced their risk of dying from lung cancer by 20 percent.

Screening means testing for a disease when there are no signs. A lung cancer screening is a low-dose CT scan that looks for early signs of cancer such as nodules, or small growths, in your lungs. A low-dose CT scan offers the best chance of finding lung cancer in its earliest and most treatable stages.

How is the low-dose CT scan performed?

You will lie on a table that passes through the center of the scanner. The low-dose CT scan is painless and can be performed with a single short breath hold and takes less than 15 seconds.

What happens after my low-dose CT scan?

A radiologist, a physician who specializes in reading images, will interpret your low-dose CT scan and recommend either a one-year follow-up or further testing. Results will be sent to your provider.

How much radiation will I receive during the low-dose CT scan?

Radiation from a low-dose CT scan can be up to 90 percent less than the dose from a standard chest CT. The benefit of finding and treating early lung cancer far outweighs that risk. The amount of radiation exposure from a low-dose CT scan is about the same as a person would receive from background radiation (such as sun exposure) over a period of one year.

Will insurance cover the cost of my lung cancer screening?

Medicare and commercial insurance will most likely cover the service. You are encouraged to contact your insurance agency to verify whether this is a covered exam. Prior authorization of the CT scan may be required.

How do I schedule my lung cancer screening?

Talk to your provider. If a lung cancer screening is right for you, he or she can help order and schedule a low-dose CT scan.

Low-dose CT lung scan benefits

- Detects lung cancer or abnormalities at the earliest, most treatable stage.
- Is safe, fast, painless and noninvasive.
- Provides quality images with less radiation.
- Allows for more treatment options if an abnormality is found early.
- Can save your life.

Low-dose CT lung scan risks

- Any exposure to radiation has a small risk of increasing the chance of developing cancer.
- False-positive results occur when a test appears to be abnormal but no lung cancer is found.
- False-negative results occur when you have a medical condition, including lung cancer, that is not found during your exam.
- Additional testing may be required and may cause anxiety for the patient.
- Invasive procedures (biopsy or surgery) may be required to determine whether a nodule is cancerous.
- Over-diagnosis can occur when a low-dose CT scan leads to the detection and treatment of cancer which may never have harmed you. This can result in unnecessary treatment, complications and cost.

Know that not all cancers detected by a low-dose CT scan will be found early. Screening that detects lung cancer may not improve your health or help you live longer if the disease has already spread to other places in the body.

Who should be screened for lung cancer?

People with a history of cigarette smoking have a higher risk of lung cancer. Based on the National Lung Screening Trial findings, lung cancer screening is recommended for these groups of people:

Age 50 - 77 years AND current smokers with a smoking history of at least 20-pack years (for example, 1 pack/day for 20 years, 2 packs/day for 10 years, etc.)

OR former smokers with at least a 20-pack year smoking history who have quit within the last 15 years

What should I consider when deciding on lung cancer screening?

- Lung cancer screening should be done every year until you no longer need to be screened.
- Lung cancer screening may not be right for you if you have other major health problems.
- Lung cancer screening is not a substitute for quitting smoking.

Benefits of quitting smoking

- Lower your risk for other types of cancer.
- Lower your risk for heart disease, stroke and narrowing of the blood vessels outside your heart.
- Experience fewer problems with breathing, such as coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath.
- Lower your risk for other lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD).

Remember, the best way to protect yourself from lung cancer is to quit smoking. If you currently smoke or were a heavy smoker, please talk to your health care provider about the lung cancer screening program nearest you or call one of the many services to help you quit smoking.

Quitline

- 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)
- <https://www.quitlineiowa.org>

If you have any questions please call 546-3394 or 1-800-642-6074 ext. 3394