

Lung Cancer... Just the FACTS



Lung Cancer Center

SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL

Q What is lung cancer?

A Lung cancer occurs when cells in the lung grow and multiply uncontrollably, damaging surrounding tissue and interfering with the normal function of the lung. The cells can spread to other parts of the body.

Q What are the symptoms of lung cancer?

A Most lung cancers do not cause symptoms until they have spread. However, you should check with your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms: a cough that will not go away and gets worse over time, constant chest pain, arm or shoulder pain, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, wheezing or hoarseness. Other symptoms can include repeated episodes of pneumonia or bronchitis, swelling of the neck and face, loss of appetite and/or weight loss, fatigue and clubbing of the fingers.

Many of these symptoms may not be attributed to cancer. If symptoms persist for more than two weeks, see your doctor.

Q How common is lung cancer?

A An estimated 164,000 deaths occur each year from lung cancer in the United States. It is the leading cancer killer among men and women in the United States, causing more deaths than the next three most common cancers (colon, breast and prostate) combined. Lung cancer occurs most often in people over 50 who have long histories of cigarette smoking. Males have about a one-third higher probability of developing lung cancer than do females. Overall, Americans have about a seven percent chance of developing lung cancer during their lifetimes.

Q What causes lung cancer?

A **Smoking**
By far the leading risk factor, cigarette smoking, is responsible for 87 percent of lung cancer cases in the United States. Smoking two or more packs a day results in an increased mortality rate 12 to 25 times greater than nonsmokers. Cigar and pipe smokers are also at increased risk, as are people who live with or who are routinely around smokers.

Family History

Recent research shows that a family history of lung cancer may be a risk factor.

Occupational or Environmental Exposure

Another leading cause of lung cancer is on-the-job exposure to carcinogens. Asbestos is the best known industrial substance associated with lung cancer. Some others are radon, uranium, arsenic and certain petroleum products. Air pollution has also been attributed to a slightly increased risk of lung cancer.



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Q What are the different types of lung cancer?

A The majority of lung cancer cases fall into two major categories, small-cell and non-small-cell lung cancer. Non-small-cell lung cancer is the most common type, making up almost 80 percent of all cases. Non-small-cell lung cancers can be either squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma or large-cell lung cancer. These spread to different parts of the body more slowly than small-cell lung cancer. Small-cell lung cancer, also called oat cell cancer, accounts for less than 20 percent of all lung cancer but spreads quickly to other organs. It is almost always caused by smoking or second-hand smoke.

Q What are the treatments for lung cancer?

A Treatment is determined by the type of lung cancer. Surgery is usually the recommended treatment for localized disease. Radiation and chemotherapy are sometimes used in combination with surgery for later stages.

Q What are the advantages of early detection?

A Early detection of lung cancer leads to a better chance of a cure. Individuals who smoke and/or are at a high risk of developing lung cancer may wish to undergo screening.

Q What types of screenings are available?

A Standard screening tests, such as chest X-rays and checking sputum (spit) for cancer cells are available, but studies show that they may not find many lung cancers early enough to improve a person's chance for a cure. Recently new X-ray technology called CT scanning has shown promise in finding early lung cancer in smokers and former smokers. It is not yet known if this test will lower the chances of dying from lung cancer.

Q How can I reduce my risk of getting lung cancer?

A Eliminating use of tobacco products is the best way to reduce your chances of getting lung cancer. Using protective equipment when exposed to dangerous chemicals and pollutants, and avoiding second-hand smoke can also reduce your risk. A good diet with lots of fruits and vegetables may also help prevent lung cancer.

Final thoughts on lung cancer:

Speak to cancer experts and get the best information you can. Proper treatment at any stage can extend life, improve comfort or even cure the disease. No patient should believe "nothing can be done."

*For more information about the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of lung cancer, or to schedule an appointment, contact the Lung Cancer Center at Saint Vincent Hospital at **508-363-5035**.*



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