



**LUNG CANCER ALLIANCE**

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**UNDERSTANDING  
LUNG  
CANCER  
RISK AND  
SCREENING**

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**1-800-298-2436**

**[LungCancerAlliance.org](https://LungCancerAlliance.org)**

## RISK

Your risk for lung cancer is unique to you. Here are some factors that might put you at risk for lung cancer:

- A history of smoking
- Exposure to radon or asbestos
- A history of lung cancer in your immediate family
- Exposure to Agent Orange or other cancer causing materials
- A diagnosis of other respiratory disease such as COPD, emphysema, chronic bronchitis or pneumonia
- Contact with secondhand smoke

## SCREENING

### WHAT IS CANCER SCREENING?

A test to check for disease in someone who does not have any symptoms. Some examples of cancer screening include mammograms for breast cancer, pap smears for cervical cancer and colonoscopies for colon cancer. The goal of screening is to find cancer early when it is more treatable and even curable.

For lung cancer, low dose CT (LDCT) scans are the only proven method. Chest x-rays are not effective.

### WHO SHOULD BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

You should be screened for lung cancer if you are between 55-80, have at least a 30 pack year\* smoking history and currently smoke or quit within 15 years.\*\*

If you are 50 or older, have a 20 pack year smoking history and one additional risk factor (other than secondhand smoke exposure), you should talk with your doctor or local screening program to see if screening is recommended for you.

### WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER BEING SCREENED?

When lung cancer is caught early, it is easier to treat and more likely to be curable.

### ARE THERE RISKS INVOLVED WITH SCREENING?

All cancer screening tests have risks. LDCT scans often find spots in the lungs that are not cancers. If they look a certain way or are over a certain size, an additional scan or procedure may be needed to diagnose or rule out cancer. There is also a small amount of radiation used in the test.

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\* **How to calculate your pack years:**

Average number of packs smoked per day X number of years as a smoker = your pack years  
(Example: 1 pack a day for 20 years = 20 pack years)

\*\***U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended**

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE SCREENED?

Talk to your doctor about the results of your first screening to determine what you need to do next. For most people, a yearly scan is recommended.

## WHERE SHOULD I BE SCREENED?

You should be screened for lung cancer only in an experienced center that follows approved guidelines for lung cancer screening, such as a Lung Cancer Alliance Screening Center of Excellence. To find a center near you, call our HelpLine at 1-800-298-2436 or visit our website at [www.lungcanceralliance.org](http://www.lungcanceralliance.org).

## MORE INFORMATION

Here are some questions to ask your local screening center to determine whether they are screening responsibly:

### 1. What test do you use to screen for lung cancer?

The test should be a LDCT scan, which means that the radiation amount is much lower than in a regular CT scan.

### 2. Who will interpret the scan?

LDCT scans can be more challenging to read than regular CT scans. It is best for a radiologist with experience reading and reporting LDCT scans of the chest to be the one to interpret your scan.

### 3. What guidelines will be used if something is found?

There are several sets of guidelines developed by professional organizations being used in lung cancer screening and all of them are acceptable. What is important is that your center follows one of them consistently.

### 4. What will happen if something is found?

If something found needs further evaluation, it is good to go to a center that will work with your primary care doctor to arrange the follow up care that you need, preferably from a team of doctors that work together to evaluate and treat you.

### 5. Who is eligible for screening in your program?

Currently, only people who are older and have a significant smoking history should be screened for lung cancer, unless it is through a research study (see "Who should be screened for lung cancer?").

**Contact us if you have questions:** 1-800-298-2436  
[www.lungcanceralliance.org](http://www.lungcanceralliance.org)



## LUNG CANCER ALLIANCE

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SAVING LIVES AND ADVANCING  
RESEARCH BY EMPOWERING THOSE  
LIVING WITH AND AT RISK FOR  
LUNG CANCER

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### WHAT WE DO

- Offer personalized support, information and referral services at no cost through a team of trained, dedicated staff members to help patients, their loved ones and those at risk.
- Advocate for increased lung cancer research funding and equitable access, coverage and reimbursement for screening, treatment, diagnostics and testing.
- Conduct nationwide education campaigns about the disease, risk and early detection.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Become a Volunteer
  - Join a National Shine a Light on Lung Cancer Event
  - Sign up for a Lung Love Run/Walk
  - Contact Congress and the President
  - Donate
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Our programs are made possible by generous support from people like you. Please consider giving back so that others may continue to receive these free services. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law. Copyright © 2014, Lung Cancer Alliance. All rights reserved.

The content of this brochure has been reviewed by members of our Medical and Professional Advisory Board.

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