

## **Lung Cancer Walk: Yes, You Can Do it, One Step at a Time!**

By Renee Kosiarek

A walk can be big or small, simple or complex. It is all up to you. However you spin it though, a walk can be a great occasion to get together in the name of lung cancer. Walks often bring more publicity and awareness than other functions, and help people feel like they are doing something important.

Anyone can put together a walk. Really! It takes time, and a little patience and hard work, but it can be done. The first thing to do is start! Decide that, no matter what, you will have a walk for lung cancer. Five people are better than none, and you certainly can pull five people together for a walk around the neighborhood, can't you?

If you want to make it more complex, follow these steps, and watch the walk happen:

1. Find a venue. Perhaps you want to call the town hall and ask about having a walk on public streets. Some cities require permits and insurance, but some may not. So ask around. You could also contact local schools, including colleges that may have a track. Many will allow use of a track for a charitable cause: all you have to do is ask. So make some calls, and be flexible on the date. If a place is willing to allow you to use their track, ask if they may have a sound system you can use. Check on whether restrooms will be accessible, and if there is a water fountain nearby. While a short walk can be held without these "perks," you should know what you are getting into, and shop around. Be sure to visit the sites you are most interested in. Obviously, a street with a lot of passersby is good for awareness, and a track visible from a busy street is better than one hiding behind a parking lot.

Also remember that, if you are doing a very small walk, it can be informally held around your neighborhood. Again, it does not have to be a grand occasion!

2. Get volunteers. The more help you can get, the better. While one person can organize a walk independently, it will be a lot easier and more fun if you can get some help. Ask your friends and family members to help, and ask them to reach out to their loved ones as well for assistance. Put up signs at the grocery store, library, and even wellness houses asking for help. Once you have secured a group of volunteers, you might want to hold a meeting to organize the workers' roles and duties. Some volunteers can assist with sponsors, publicity, and speakers (see below) and some may just want to assist on the day of the walk. However they want to help, take their assistance with gratitude.
3. Find sponsors. So many people have been touched by lung cancer that it really is easier than one may imagine to get sponsors to assist with the costs of the walk. When trying to get sponsors, you want to make a short plea for why the cause is important (i.e. why lung cancer is such an important cause), and also offer some publicity to the sponsor. In this regard, you can offer to print the sponsor's logo

on t-shirts or publicity materials, and mention that they can have business cards at the walk, and will be thanked publicly during the walk as well.

When getting sponsors, first decide what you need. For most walks, you will want some food, beverages, signs, tables, and chairs. You should also have a sound system, unless there will be fewer than twenty people at the walk. Some people may choose to get t-shirts, entertainment and goodie bags as well. Once you have decided what you need, start by asking your own employer, and asking your volunteers and friends and family to reach out to their employers. Some will be more than happy to donate some money that can assist with purchases such as food or t-shirts.

Next, start calling local businesses that can help you. You may want a printer to help with banners, posters, and signs. So call the local printers in the phone book, and do not stop until you have a printer that has agreed to help. Continue to do this for everything on your list of “wants.” For food, remember to call local bakeries, bagel shops, and bread stores. Many of these places throw away food every night that is wonderfully edible. These stores will likely donate food, as may some of your local grocery stores and coffee shops. The key here is: do not give up! You will get sponsors, but it does take some effort. So keep it up.

4. Get publicity! Start with your local papers. Write letters and emails telling them about your walk. Likely, it will be the 1<sup>st</sup> ever walk devoted to lung cancer in the area, which is definitely a newsworthy story for the local papers. After writing the letters, call the newspaper directly to follow-up: this really is the only way to get attention, as most emails and letters are set aside and forgotten. When you call, mention that you are organizing a walk for lung cancer and you believe the readers would want to know about this important function. Someone at the paper will talk to you! All you have to do is call.

Do not stop at the local papers. Contact your local news agencies and radio stations. You can get websites on [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) for many local stations. Again, write a letter, and follow it up with phone calls. Ask for stations to cover the event. You may be surprised. Sometimes, sharing the news and spreading the word about the widespread effects of lung cancer is enough to get some serious publicity.

5. Work on attendance. Post signs about the walk all over town! Contact local schools, churches, and groups to inform them about the walk and lung cancer in general. Meet with the local wellness houses and hospitals, and ask if they can help promote the walk. And again, ask your family and friends to spread the word as well.
6. Plan for the day. You probably should have someone give a short speech about lung cancer and the importance of the walk. This should be done before people start walking, and can be a great way to get the crowd excited about the event!

Anyone can speak so long as they are prepared. Lung Cancer Alliance has wonderful fact sheets that can prepare a person to give a short, yet meaningful speech about lung cancer and the importance of the walk. Of course, you may want to get more prominent speakers, such as an oncologist, nurse, or even a lung cancer survivor to speak. If you decide to go that route, simply pick up the phone and call those individuals whom you think would make a significant contribution to the event. Some will say no, but surely with enough persistence, some will agree to help you.

Some people choose to have a rally after the event. Should you decide to have a rally, you will likely want to secure a couple of speakers (such as an oncologist or a survivor). You may also want a singer or other entertainer. Again, do an internet search in your area for singers (even wedding singers) and ask them to volunteer their time. The worst they can say is no.

If you do have a rally, you may want to have a table devoted to education. Here, you can again ask Lung Cancer Alliance to provide you with fact sheets. You can also ask local wellness houses to provide some literature, and even the hospitals should you so desire.

For the day of the walk, make sure you post a couple of signs so people can easily find the event. You will need some volunteers to help you set-up the tables and such. You also need a couple of people to assist with registration (assuming you have more than 20 people). These people can also pass out the t-shirts and any other material you may want to provide. In addition, you should probably have a couple of people standing by the food/beverage area.

After that, enjoy the walk, and soak in the marvelous accomplishment you have made. A walk is a wonderful way to gather people together in the name of lung cancer. So many other charities have walks, and so should lung cancer! Do not be afraid. Take it one step at a time, and watch as an amazing event unfolds.