

Lung Cancer Screening Program

Cleveland Clinic Chest Cancer Center

What is screening?

Screening means that a test is done to look for a disease, in someone at risk of developing the disease, before the disease has advanced enough to cause symptoms. The goal of screening is to reduce the number of people who die from the disease by detecting the disease early in its course, when it is easier to treat, with minimal harm to those who are screened.

Benefits of lung cancer screening

You can be screened for lung cancer using a low-dose computed tomography (CT) scan. CT scans combine X-ray views from multiple angles, creating a two-dimensional, cross-sectional image of your lungs. Having a lung cancer screening chest CT reduces the chance of dying from lung cancer in those at very high risk of developing lung cancer.

Eligibility for lung cancer screening

To be a candidate for lung screening, an individual must be:

- 55 to 77 years old.
- A smoker or a person who quit smoking less than 15 years ago.
- Have a smoking history of at least 30 pack-years. (A pack year is a way of determining how many cigarettes a person has smoked during his or her lifetime. One pack year is equal to smoking 20 cigarettes, or one pack, every day for one year.)
- Have no new symptoms that could be related to lung cancer;
- Be healthy enough to tolerate curative intent treatment for early stage lung cancer; and,
- Have not had a chest CT in the last 12 months

Drawbacks to consider

Screening for lung cancer with a chest CT can find small spots in the lungs of at least 25 percent of all people who get the scan. These spots are called lung nodules. Only three or four out of 100 lung nodules found are cancer. The rest are small scars that will never affect your health.

There is no way to tell if many of these small lung nodules are scars or lung cancer without further tests. CT scans are usually done over time to see if the lung nodule grows. You might need a biopsy if the lung nodule is large enough.

Therefore, many people who are screened will have further tests without actually having lung cancer. The lung cancer screening program will talk with you about whether or not you need more tests.

Lung cancer screening CTs use a very small dose of radiation to take pictures of your lungs. The dose of radiation is quite low (five times less than a standard chest CT scan). The effects of radiation from lung cancer screening are not known. The benefits are thought to outweigh any consequences.

Quitting smoking

If you smoke, you can cut your risk of dying from lung cancer by quitting. We advise all smokers to quit. You can find help from your doctor or through counsellors within the screening program.

Components of our Lung Cancer Screening Program

1. Participants selected according to current national health guidelines.
2. In-person discussion about the benefits and harms of lung cancer screening to help make informed choices.
3. Standardized low-dose chest CT.
4. Chest CT interpretation by radiologists with expertise in chest imaging.
5. Lung nodule evaluation care pathway.
6. Tobacco treatment experts integrated with the program.
7. Cutting-edge research to improve tomorrow's outcomes.
8. Experts in the treatment of lung cancer.
9. Central call-in number for questions.

Questions?

If you have any questions about our Lung Cancer Screening Program, please call 1.216.445.3800 or visit clevelandclinic.org/lungcancerscreening