

NOVEMBER 2013 • FACTS

Lung Cancer

November Is Lung Cancer Awareness Month

So it's a good time to review what we know. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths. It causes about 27% of them.¹ In 2013, about 159,000 people will die from lung cancer.¹ On average they'll be about 72 years old.² And about 7 of 8 of them will have non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) rather than small cell lung cancer.²

Only about 17% of people with lung cancer survive 5 years after diagnosis.¹ *As with other cancers, prevention and early detection are key.* The 5-year survival rates are¹:

- 52% when detected at the local stage
- 25% when detected at the regional stage
- 4% when detected at the distant stage

Signs and Symptoms

Some symptoms of lung cancer are coughing, chest pain, and trouble breathing. Others may include:

- Wheezing
- Coughing up blood
- Hoarseness
- Trouble swallowing
- Loss of appetite
- Sudden weight loss
- Feeling tired
- Swelling in the face or veins in the neck

Risk Factors

The number one risk factor is smoking. Smoking tobacco may cause as many as 90% of all lung cancers.³ The risk increases the longer a person smokes and the more a person smokes.^{1,4,5} The good news is that if a person stops smoking, the risk will go down. But it will never be as low as it would have been if the person never smoked.⁵

Some other risk factors are:

- Secondhand smoke (tobacco smoke breathed in by a nonsmoker)
- Exposure to asbestos or other toxins in the environment
- Exposure to radiation, like the kind used to treat other cancers
- Family history of lung cancer
- Having had tuberculosis or certain other lung diseases



Important Lung Cancer Facts

- Lung cancer is the second most common form of cancer.¹
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer.¹
- Smoking is the most important risk factor for getting lung cancer.¹
- As many as 90% of lung cancers are caused by smoking.³
- Lung cancer survival has been getting better over time. This is because there are many new therapies to treat patients with this disease.^{1,6}
- Nearly 90% of patients who are diagnosed eventually die from the disease.³
- Early detection is important in lung cancer; it increases survival for lung cancer patients.¹
- If you are a smoker, quitting smoking is a good way to lower your risk of lung cancer.⁵

Screening and Early Detection

People at high risk for getting lung cancer should be screened every year using a low-dose CT scan. This scan is the only early detection method that can improve survival in high-risk people.⁶

Diagnosis and Treatment

Lung cancer diagnosis can involve different tests. A CT scan, chest x-ray, and/or biopsy may be needed.⁶

Treatment depends on the stage of the disease and other factors. Options include:

- Surgery to remove the tumor
- Radiation to kill the tumor cells
- Chemotherapy to kill the tumor cells or limit their growth
- Targeted therapies that attack the things that help cancer cells grow

Side effects of targeted therapies are often less than those of other drugs. But they are not for all patients. Doctors use laboratory tests to find out if targeted drugs might work for a patient. The tests look for mutations (changes) in certain genes. These genes include *EGFR*, *KRAS*, *ALK*, and *ROS1*.

References

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