



Lung Cancer Screening

Lung cancer is the deadliest form of cancer in the United States: more Americans die of lung cancer than breast, colon, cervix and prostate cancers combined. In 2015, lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer-related death for both men and women, across nearly all races and ethnicities.

Early detection of lung cancer is important. The five-year survival rate for cases of lung cancer diagnosed during the early stages is over 50%. Unfortunately, however, a majority of lung cancer cases are diagnosed in late stages, when the five-year survival rate is just 5%.

Screening for lung cancer can detect cancer before symptoms occur and before the cancer metastasizes, or spreads to other organs.

Research supports the screening of high risk smokers to improve early detection. RHA recommends all smokers consider quitting and that they enroll in evidence-based tobacco cessation programs such as RHA's Courage to Quit®.

Who should be screened?

Individuals considered at high risk for lung cancer are those who meet all of the following conditions:

- Age: 55-74 years old, in relatively good health;
- Smoking Status: Currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years;
- Smoking History: At least a 30 pack-year history (i.e., smoked one pack of cigarettes per day for at least 30 years or smoked two packs of cigarettes per day for at least 15 years)

What is a lung cancer screening?

Various health and medical organizations recommend annual low dose computed tomography (LDCT) screening (similar to a CT scan) for high risk individuals. Low dose computed tomography screenings are painless and non-invasive.

Compared to the conventional form of x-ray screening, LDCT uses a lower dose of radiation to create scans and is better at detecting smaller abnormalities in the lungs.

What is the benefit to annual screening?

Research has shown that LDCT can detect cancer in its early stages and reduce lung cancer mortality by up to 20%.

What are screening concerns?

Research acknowledges the high rate of false positive diagnoses with LDCT technology. False positive diagnoses may lead to unnecessary additional testing and even invasive procedures. This may result in complications and added anxiety for patients.

What is the cost of a LDCT screening?

In 2015, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) added LDCT screenings to the list of preventive service benefits covered by Medicare.

Patients meeting all five of the following criteria qualify for coverage:

- Aged 55-77 years;
- Have no signs or symptoms of lung cancer;
- Have a 30-pack year (or greater) history of tobacco smoking;



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What you need to know about...

- Be a current smoker or have quit smoking within the last 15 years;
- Have a written order for LDCT from a qualified health professional following a lung cancer screening counseling session