



Types of Lung Cancer

There are two main types of lung cancer: non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and small cell lung cancer (SCLC).

A majority of lung cancers in the United States are NSCLC (85%). These are primarily adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and large cell carcinoma.

SCLC tumors tend to grow and spread to other parts of the body more quickly than NSCLC tumors, but are generally more responsive to chemotherapy.

What are the stages of NSCLC?

There are four main stages of NSCLC.

Stage I: Cancer is found only in the lung, and has not spread to any lymph nodes.

Stage II: Cancer is found in the lung and has spread to nearby lymph nodes.

Stage III: Cancer is found in the lung and in lymph nodes in the middle of the chest. This stage has two further classifications based on where cancer is found:

Stage IIIA: Cancer is found only in lymph nodes on the same side of the chest where the cancer started.

Stage IIIB: Cancer is found in the side of the chest opposite to where the cancer started, or above the collar bone.

Stage IV: The cancer has advanced and spread to both lungs, to the fluid in the area around the lungs and to other parts of the body.

What are the stages of SCLC?

SCLC is classified as either limited stage or extensive stage.

In the limited stage, the cancer is found only on one side of the chest, involving just one part of the lung and nearby lymph nodes.

In the extensive stage, the cancer has spread to other regions of the chest or to other parts of the body.

Proper identification of lung cancer type and stage of cancer will dictate treatment.

Treatment can range from surgery to remove a tumor, to a combination of surgery and chemotherapy.

In all cases, RHA recommends all smokers consider quitting and that they enroll in evidence-based tobacco cessation programs such as RHA's Courage to Quit®.