



THE TRINIDAD & TOBAGO CANCER SOCIETY

Lung Cancer

Early Detection & Treatment Guidelines

What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is a type of cancer that begins in the cells of the lungs. It is one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths worldwide.

There are two main types of lung cancer:

- Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC) – The most common type, making up about 85% of cases.
- Small Cell Lung Cancer (SCLC) – A more aggressive type that spreads quickly.

How is lung cancer diagnosed?

Lung cancer is often diagnosed through a visit to your physician and involves a history a physical examination and a combination of imaging tests and biopsy procedures.

These may include:

- Chest X-ray – An initial tool that may show abnormal lung masses.
- CT Scan (Computed Tomography) – A more detailed scan to detect smaller tumors and assess lung structures.
- Sputum Cytology – Examining mucus from the lungs under a microscope for cancer cells.
- Bronchoscopy – A procedure where a thin tube is inserted into the lungs to collect tissue samples.
- Biopsy – A sample of lung tissue is taken and analyzed for cancer cells as well as genetic testing.

Who should be screened for lung cancer?

Screening tests are meant to detect a disease before any symptoms develop. An annual low dose CT-Scan is **ONLY** recommended for persons:

- Between 50 and 80 years old,
- Who currently smoke or have stopped smoking in the last 15 years,
- Who have a 20 pack-year or more smoking history. (Number of packs smoked per day multiplied by the number of years smoked).



What are the symptoms and signs of lung cancer?

Common symptoms of lung cancer include:

- A persistent cough that does not go away
- Coughing up blood or rust-colored sputum
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Chest pain that worsens with deep breathing or coughing
- Unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite
- Hoarseness or voice changes
- Fatigue and general weakness

What are the risk factors of lung cancer?

While the exact cause of lung cancer is not always known, the following risk factors have been associated with the disease:

- Smoking – The leading cause of lung cancer; both active smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke increase the risk.
- Exposure to Carcinogens – Prolonged exposure to asbestos, radon gas, diesel exhaust and certain industrial chemicals such as arsenic, chromium and nickel.
- Air Pollution – Long-term exposure to high levels of air pollution can increase the risk.
- Genetic Factors – A family history of lung cancer may raise an individual's risk.
- Previous Radiation Therapy – Cancer survivors who had radiation therapy to the chest increases the risk of Lung Cancer.
- Chronic Lung Diseases – Conditions such as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) and pulmonary fibrosis may contribute to lung cancer development.



How is lung cancer treated?

Lung cancer treatment depends on the type, stage, and overall health of the patient. Treatment options include:

- Surgery – Removal of the affected lung tissue through procedures like lobectomy or pneumonectomy.
- Radiation Therapy – The use of high-energy rays to target and destroy cancer cells.
- Chemotherapy – The use of anti-cancer drugs to kill or slow the growth of cancer cells.
- Targeted Therapy – Drugs that specifically target cancer cell abnormalities, often used in advanced cases.
- Immunotherapy – Helps the body's immune system recognize and fight cancer cells.

How can you reduce your risk?

- Quit smoking and avoid exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Test for and reduce exposure to radon gas.
- Protect yourself from occupational carcinogens.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and a nutritious diet.
- Get regular check-ups, especially if you have a history of lung disease or cancer.



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This publication was made possible by your donation to
The Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society.

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