

Just the Facts... Lung Cancer

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON
CANCER CENTER

Lung cancer occurs when cells in the lung grow and multiply uncontrollably, damaging surrounding tissue and interfering with the normal function of the lung. The cells can spread to other parts of the body. When the disease spreads, it is still called lung cancer.

Smoking is responsible for 87 percent of all lung cancer cases in the United States. Eliminating tobacco use is the key to reducing the impact of this disease.

Symptoms

Symptoms of lung cancer vary from person to person and may include:

- a cough that will not go away and gets worse over time
- constant chest pain, or arm and shoulder pain
- coughing up blood
- shortness of breath, wheezing or hoarseness
- repeated episodes of pneumonia or bronchitis
- swelling of the neck and face
- loss of appetite and/or weight loss
- fatigue
- clubbing of fingers

Many of these symptoms are not cancer, but if you notice one or more of them for more than two weeks, see your doctor.



Josephine Fleming set a world record as the first lung cancer patient to survive five years after starting gene therapy. A life-long resident of Denton, Texas, Fleming enjoys her eight grandchildren, going places with friends, and making tamales, pralines and peanut brittle.

Risk Factors

Many factors may influence the development of lung cancer, including:

- **smoking** This is by far the most important risk factor. Also at higher risk are individuals who smoke cigars and pipes.
- **family history** Research is beginning to show that a family history of lung cancer may be a risk factor.
- **personal history** A person with a previous lung cancer diagnosis is more likely to develop a second lung cancer.
- **occupational or environmental exposure** People who are routinely exposed to radon or asbestos are at increased risk for developing lung cancer — particularly if they are smokers.
- **radiation exposure** People who are routinely exposed to radiation from occupational, medical and environmental sources are at increased risk.
- **industrial exposure** People who are exposed to certain industrial substances like arsenic could be at high risk.
- **air pollution** The byproducts from the combustion of fossil fuels can put people at risk.
- **environmental tobacco smoke** People who live with or who are routinely around smokers are at higher risk.
- **lung diseases** People with lung diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) are at higher risk.

The Best of Lung Health

Screening

Cancer screenings are medical tests that are performed when a person has no symptoms. There presently are no effective screening tests to find lung cancer early. X-rays and/or laboratory analysis of the cells in phlegm and fiber optic screening are limited in detecting lung cancer before it spreads. CT scans may be able to detect lung cancer earlier, but their ability to improve long-term survival has not been proven.

Reducing Your Risk

You can take action to reduce your risk of developing lung cancer. M. D. Anderson suggests:

- eliminating tobacco use
- using protective equipment when exposed to dangerous substances and pollutants
- avoiding secondhand smoke

Take time to discuss your own risks with your health care provider who can best advise you on the screening exams and risk-reduction strategies that are right for you.

Want to learn how you can prevent cancer?

Get a personalized action plan by completing M. D. Anderson's Prevention Profile at www.mdanderson.org/prevention.



Marie Graves, who works in M. D. Anderson's Cancer Prevention Center, was diagnosed with lung cancer and made it through two surgeries, chemotherapy and all the related emotional ups and downs. She says her faith, a positive attitude, support of co-workers and "wonderful doctors" helped her meet the challenge.

M. D. Anderson Resources:

M. D. Anderson's Cancer Prevention Center offers a wide range of services, including risk assessment, risk-reduction counseling and screening. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (713) 745-8040 or 1-800-438-6434.

Other M. D. Anderson resources are available to the public, including patient support services, educational programs, guided tours, a learning center and wellness programs. You don't have to be an M. D. Anderson patient to use many of these services.

For more information about M. D. Anderson programs, services or referral, contact *askMDAnderson* at 1-877-MDA-6789 or www.mdanderson.org/contact_us.



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