



# NC LUNG CANCER



## What is lung cancer?

Refers to any cancer that forms in the tissues of the bronchus or lung. Lung cancers are usually grouped in two main types, small cell and non-small cell. These differ in how fast they grow and how they are treated. Non-small cell lung cancer is more common than small cell lung cancer. Smoking is a major risk factor for both types of lung cancer. Approximately 80% of all lung cancer is caused by cigarette smoking.<sup>1</sup> Among people who have never smoked, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer. People who smoke and are exposed to radon have an increased risk of lung cancer.<sup>2</sup>

## Risk Factors

These risk factors may increase your chances for developing lung cancer.

- **Tobacco use** (cigarette, cigars, pipe, e-cigarettes, vape pens and e-hookah).
- **Exposure to environmental hazards** (secondhand smoke, radon, asbestos, coal dust, other chemicals or substances).
- **Radiation therapy to the chest.**
- **Personal and/or family history of lung cancer.**



## Symptoms

Most people do not have any symptoms of lung cancer until the cancer is advanced. Lung cancer symptoms may include:

- coughing that gets worse or does not go away,
- chest pain,
- shortness of breath,
- wheezing,
- coughing up blood,
- feeling very tired all time and/or
- unexplained weight loss.<sup>3</sup>



## Lung Cancer in NC

Lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men (2,791) and women (2,322) in North Carolina in 2019. It is estimated that 9,428 people will be diagnosed with lung cancer and 5,933 people will die from lung cancer in 2021. Since 2000, the rates of new lung cancer cases and lung cancer deaths have decreased in North Carolina. However, the North Carolina rates are still higher than the national rates.<sup>4</sup>



## Screening

Screening with low-dose spiral computed tomography (LDCT) can reduce lung cancer deaths by about 20% compared to standard chest X-ray among current or former heavy smokers.

Lung cancer screening is recommended if you are someone who:

- is between 50 and 80 years old.
- has a 20 pack-year history. This means patients will be eligible if they, for example, smoked one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years and
- smokes now or has quit within the past 15 years.<sup>5</sup>



**Talk to your doctor about getting a lung cancer screening.**

# You can reduce your Lung Cancer Risk!

- **Quit tobacco and vaping use.** Quitting takes practice! Coaching and medications can triple your chances of quitting for good. Call 1-800-Quit-Now or check out [www.QuitlineNC.com](http://www.QuitlineNC.com) for help.
- **Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.**
- **Test your home for radon.** For testing well water, contact the environmental health program at your local health department. For testing air, contact (919) 814-2290 or [www.ncradon.org/Testing.html](http://www.ncradon.org/Testing.html).
- **Be aware of workplace environmental hazards.** Avoid exposure to cancer-causing chemicals or substances. Follow safety procedures.
- **Get a lung cancer screening, if eligible.**
- **Know your family health history including cancer illnesses and deaths.**
- **Eat Healthy.** Eat more fruits and vegetables, drink more water and fewer sugar-sweetened beverages and create meal plans to cook at home.
- **Be physically active.** Strive to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week and strength training at least twice a week.



## Treatment

Treatment is usually most successful when cancer is detected early. Lung cancer treatment options include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and targeted cancer therapies. Small cell and non-small cell lung cancers are treated in different ways. Talk to your cancer doctor about the treatment options available for your type and stage of cancer. Your doctor can explain the risks and benefits of each treatment and their side effects.<sup>6</sup>

## A cancer diagnosis is an Unexpected Journey.

Talk with your healthcare provider about a health care plan to help track your care and to support your physical and emotional health needs. Ask for a patient navigator. They will help guide you through your journey and connect you to resources and support services. Be your own advocate. Build your support circle. Continue to take steps to be healthy. These steps may help improve your quality of life and lower the risk of your cancer returning.

## Take Action!

Use **My Health Action Plan** to set monthly goals to make healthy lifestyle changes.

<https://publichealth.nc.gov/cccp/>

## Don't wait, start on your My Health Action Plan today!

Need help? Talk to your healthcare provider or visit the resources below.

NCDHHS, Cancer Prevention and Control Branch. <https://publichealth.nc.gov/cccp>

Lung Cancer Initiative of North Carolina. [www.lungcancerinitiative.org](http://www.lungcancerinitiative.org)

NC Radon Program. [www.ncradon.org/Home.html](http://www.ncradon.org/Home.html)

NC Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch. [www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Lung Cancer Screening. [www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung)



### References

1 - American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures 2020.

[www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2020/cancer-facts-and-figures-2020.pdf](http://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2020/cancer-facts-and-figures-2020.pdf)

2 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Radon. [www.epa.gov/radon/health-risk-radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon/health-risk-radon)

3 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, What Are the Symptoms of Lung Cancer? [www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic\\_info/symptoms.html](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/symptoms.html)

4 - State Center for Health Statistics, NC Department of Health and Human Services, Central Cancer Registry. <https://schs.dph.ncdhhs.gov/data/cancer.cfm>

5 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Who Should Be Screened for Lung Cancer? [www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic\\_info/screening.html](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/screening.html)

6 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, How is Lung Cancer Diagnosed and Treated? [www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic\\_info/diagnosis\\_treatment.html](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/basic_info/diagnosis_treatment.html)



NC Department of Health and Human Services · Division of Public Health  
· Cancer Prevention & Control Branch · <https://publichealth.nc.gov>  
NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. · 04/2021