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A Screening You Don't Want to Miss

Learn about the importance of annual lung cancer screenings

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## It's Time To Focus On Your Lungs

Here's what to know about lung cancer screenings - it may be an important part of your annual health assessment if you are at high risk.

by Merck (Paid Content)

“

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PHOTO CREDIT: DR. RAYMOND OSAROGLAGBON

Nearly one out of every four Americans who die of cancer will die of lung cancer – by far the leading cause of cancer death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> With statistics like that, the thought of being diagnosed with the disease may be scary. However, taking steps to detect lung cancer earlier can help improve survival rates.

The later lung cancer is found, the more likely it is to spread. But **when found earlier, before it has spread, it may be more successfully treated.**<sup>2</sup> Since in most lung cancer cases, there are no signs and symptoms in the early stages of the disease, only 19% of cases are diagnosed before it has spread.<sup>3</sup> This is why annual screening for people at high risk is so important.

“We have a lot of work to do in the United States to increase lung cancer screening rates,” says Dr. Raymond Osaroglagbon MD, FACP, member of Lung Cancer Foundation of America's Scientific Advisory Board. “In 2021, less than six percent of people in the U.S. who were at high risk for lung cancer received the screening test for lung cancer, which is a low-dose CT scan.<sup>4</sup> It's important to add lung cancer screening to your annual health routine if you are at high risk.”

The low-dose CT scans that are used for lung cancer screenings are quick and painless – but where do you start? Here are some basic questions and answers, brought to you by Merck's “Focus on Your Lungs: A Screening You Don't Want to Miss” that can help guide you.

**Q. How do I know if I'm at risk?**

The greatest risk for developing lung cancer is a **history of smoking**, but there are other risk factors you should consider.<sup>5</sup> These include a **family history of lung cancer** or **exposure to certain materials in the environment** like secondhand smoke, asbestos, radon gas and other materials that cause cancer like arsenic, chromium and nickel.<sup>5</sup>

“When determining if someone is eligible for a lung cancer screening, we follow the guidelines published by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF), which recommends that adults between ages 50 and 80 should be screened annually with a low-dose CT scan if they currently smoke or quit within the past 15 years, and have at least a 20 pack-year smoking history,” says Dr. Osaroglagbon.

A pack year is the number of packs of cigarettes a person smoked per day, multiplied by the number of years they have smoked.<sup>6</sup> For example, a person with 20 pack-years could have smoked 1 pack a day for 20 years, 2 packs a day for 10 years, or half a pack a day for 40 years, etc.

**Q. What is a lung cancer screening?**

Lung cancer screening is conducted via low-dose computed tomography (called low-dose CT or LDCT) scan. During a low-dose CT scan, you lie on a table and an X-ray machine takes pictures of your lungs.<sup>7</sup> **These tests are safe, don't involve needles and only take a few minutes.** In fact, low-dose CT scans provide quality images using 90% less radiation than a standard CT scan of the chest.<sup>8</sup>

**Q. How do I get a lung cancer screening?**

When your doctor determines you are eligible for screening after reviewing your risk factors, they can order a low-dose CT scan for you. **Insurance plans may cover annual lung cancer screening for people who are eligible**, but it's important to check with your insurance provider about your coverage and what is needed in order to schedule an appointment for a scan.<sup>9</sup>

Once you make your appointment, the radiology center will tell you how to prepare. After your screening, your results will be sent to a doctor who specializes in reading these scans. Your doctor will contact you with the results and discuss recommendations for any next steps.

**Don't let fear stand in the way of getting screened for lung cancer.** It's common to feel some anxiety around screening.<sup>10,11</sup> Your doctor can help answer your questions and address your concerns. Take time to focus on your lungs and ask your doctor about screening today.

**Click here to visit [Focusonyourlungs.com](https://focusonyourlungs.com) to see if you may be eligible for lung cancer screening, find a screening location near you, and learn more information about screening for you or a loved one.**

1 ACS Key Statistics for Lung Cancer 2022

2 ALA State of Lung Cancer 2021

3 NCI SEER Cancer Stat Facts Lung and Bronchus 2022

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5 ACS Lung Cancer Risk Factors 2019

6 USPSTF Final Recommendation Screening Lung Cancer 2021

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