

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer develops in the tissues of the lung, usually in the cells lining air passages. It is responsible for the most cancer-related deaths in both men and women in Texas. The most common type, non-small cell lung cancer, accounts for approximately 80 to 85 percent of lung cancers. Lung cancer can be treated and is often preventable, but only 15 percent of men and 21 percent of women live more than five years beyond their initial diagnosis.

Statistics

- In 2018, an estimated 234,030 people will be diagnosed with lung cancer, and 154,050 deaths are expected in the U.S.
- Lung cancer is the deadliest cancer in both Texas and the United States, and claims more lives each year than colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined.
- In 2018 in Texas, an estimated 15,485 new lung cancer cases and 11,092 deaths are expected from the disease.
- About 80 to 90 percent of all lung cancer deaths are attributed to smoking, and smoking accounts for roughly 25 percent of all cancer deaths.
- Men and women who smoke are 25 times more likely to develop lung cancer.
- Up to 20 percent of Americans that die of lung cancer each year have never smoked.

Risk Factors

- **Smoking:** Tobacco smoke is the most important risk factor for lung cancer, as it is thought to cause most lung cancer deaths. Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer in nonsmokers. The more a person is exposed to smoke, the greater their risk of developing lung cancer. However, some people who have never smoked may develop lung cancer.
- **Age:** Most people diagnosed with lung cancer are 65 or older.
- **Family and/or Personal History:** People with a parent or sibling who had lung cancer have a higher than average risk, even if they are nonsmokers. Lung cancer survivors are at increased risk of secondary primary cancers.
- **Exposure:** People who live or work in certain conditions where they are exposed to radioactive gas, asbestos, arsenic, radon, diesel exhaust, air pollution, and other substances have an increased risk of developing lung cancer.

Symptoms

Lung cancer symptoms vary with each patient. People with these symptoms should consult their physician:

- Chest pain made worse with deeper breathing, coughing, or laughing
- Coughing up blood or a persistent cough
- Hoarseness
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue or weakness
- Wheezing
- Breathing trouble, such as shortness of breath
- Frequent or persistent lung infections
- Weight loss

Prevention and Screening

- **Do not smoke.** Smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer and can shorten life expectancy by 10 years
- **Avoid secondhand smoke.** More than 7,000 people in the U.S. die annually from lung cancer as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- **Take precautions at work.** Exposure to certain types of fumes, dust, and chemicals can cause lung cancer.
- **Test your home for radon.** Radon is a radioactive gas that cannot be seen, felt, or tasted. Some homes are built on soil with natural uranium deposits, which can create high levels of indoor radon exposure, increasing risk for lung cancer. Radon detection kits, as well as EPA-suggested companies, can be used to test your home for radon.
- **Get screened.** People ages 55 to 74 with a history of heavy smoking, who smoke now, or who quit within the past 15 years, and have a 30 pack-year smoking history are at a higher risk for lung cancer and should consider a yearly low-dose CT to screen for lung cancer.

Treatment Options

Lung cancer, depending on the stage, may be treated by a team of specialists, including pulmonologists, thoracic surgeons, medical oncologists, and radiation oncologists. Treatment options vary depending on the stage and type of the cancer, the patient's symptoms and overall health, and a variety of other factors. Lung cancer found at an early stage may be curable with surgery alone or with chemotherapy after surgery, and a small number of lung cancer cases that have spread to nearby organs can be cured with chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Targeted therapies may be beneficial in lung cancers with certain gene mutations, which can be identified by molecular testing. Immunotherapy, with which drugs reduce a tumor's resistance to the body's immune system, have become an important addition to standard treatments. Radiation therapy and proton therapy are other treatment options. Clinical trials evaluating new therapies for lung cancer may be available to patients.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Society of Clinical Oncology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, Texas Cancer Registry, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency