

LUNG CANCER CT SCREENING:

IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

Screening for cancer means testing for cancer *before* there are any symptoms. Screening for some types of cancer has reduced deaths by early detection and treatment. Now there is a test that *can* reduce death from lung cancer through early detection. The test is not recommended for everyone and it has risks as well as benefits. Here are key points you may want to use in discussion with your patients who may be at risk for lung cancer or are worried about their risk for lung cancer.

The best way to prevent lung cancer is to never smoke or stop smoking now. If you are still smoking, talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit smoking.

Q: Am I a candidate for lung cancer screening?

A: If you are:

- a *current or former smoker*
- and in the age group from *55 to 74 years*
- and with a *smoking history of at least 30 pack-years* (this means 1 pack a day for 30 years, 2 packs a day for 15 years, etc.)

You are in the group at highest risk for lung cancer and screening for lung cancer is recommended for you. The risk for lung cancer is different for each person. If you are not in this group talk to your doctor about your concerns.

Q: Should I get a CT scan to screen for lung cancer?

A: Talk to your own doctor about getting a CT scan to screen for lung cancer. Screening for lung cancer may save your life. Be sure to discuss your *complete* health history. Ask for a clear explanation about the possible *benefits and risks* of being screened for lung cancer. There are some risks and not everyone should be screened for lung cancer. **Only Low Dose CT scans** are recommended for screening. **Chest X-rays are not recommended** for lung cancer screening.

Q: What happens if I choose to get a CT scan for lung cancer?

A: There is some radiation risk with a CT scan and you may need to have additional tests and procedures. You should go to a facility that uses “best practices” for lung cancer screening. This means a hospital or screening center that has a *team of experts* who will clearly explain the procedure to you. The team should tell you about all the risks and benefits of the screening. They should also discuss what the results can mean and *how they will follow up with you after the initial screening*.

Q: What does it cost to have a CT scan for lung cancer?

A: The cost is usually \$300 to \$500. Health insurance companies and Medicare **may not cover the cost** for a CT scan to screen for lung cancer at this time. That means that you may pay for the test on your own. Be sure to check with your insurance plan to see what is covered if the results of the CT scan show that you should have additional procedures. **Ask your doctor and the facility doing the CT scan to carefully and clearly explain all costs** that you may possibly have and not just the cost of the CT scan alone.

Q: What do the results mean?

A: A **“suspicious” result means that the CT scan shows something is abnormal.** This could mean lung cancer. It could also mean some other serious condition. It could also mean there is no serious condition and that is called a “false positive”. You may need to have additional procedures to find out exactly what is abnormal. If you do have lung cancer or some other serious condition, your doctor and the team of experts should discuss all possible treatment options with you.

A **“negative” result** means that there were no abnormal findings at this time and on this CT scan. It **does not mean you absolutely do not have lung cancer.** It **does not mean that you will never get lung cancer.** Your doctor should discuss when and if you should be tested again.

The best way to prevent lung cancer is to never smoke or stop smoking now. If you are still smoking, talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit smoking.

Q: Where can I get more information about lung cancer and lung cancer screening?

A: You can contact the American Lung Association to find out more about lung cancer and lung cancer screening.

Go to: www.Lung.org

Call: 1-800 LUNG USA (1-800-586-4872)