

lung cancer

protect yourself: know the facts

What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer begins when cells that are not normal grow inside the lungs. The lungs are part of the respiratory system, which controls breathing. Kentucky's rates of lung cancer cases and lung cancer deaths are high compared to other states.

What causes lung cancer?

Smoking (cigarettes, cigars, and pipes) causes 80-90 percent of lung cancers. Also, non-smokers who breathe secondhand smoke (smoke from others) at home or at work increase their lung cancer risk by 20-30 percent.

Radon (a gas you cannot see or smell) can also cause lung cancer. Radon comes from rocks and soil. It can be found in places with poor air flow, such as mines, and in some homes. The basement is where radon levels are highest in the home, because it is the closest room to the soil.

Other risk factors include air pollution, a personal or family history of the disease, and exposure to asbestos, arsenic, chromium, nickel, tar and other substances found in some workplaces.

What are symptoms of lung cancer?

Early lung cancer may not cause any symptoms. Doing all you can to prevent the disease is important.

Symptoms may appear after lung cancer develops and grows. These include a cough that does not go away, trouble with breathing, chest pain, coughing up blood, a hoarse voice, lung infections that keep coming back, feeling weak and tired, and loss of appetite. Often, these problems are caused by other health issues. People with any of these symptoms should see their doctor.

What are screening tests?

Screening tests help doctors find many cancers early, when they are easiest to treat. A low-dose CT scan is a picture that helps your doctor see tumors or growths in your lungs. You may be a candidate for this test if:

- you are 55-80 years old;
- a current smoker or have quit within the past 15 years;
- smoked a pack a day for 30 years, or two packs a day for 15 years.

Talk with your doctor about your risk for lung cancer and the possible benefits and harms of being screened.

How can I lower my chance of getting lung cancer?

- Stop smoking. This is the most important thing you can do, no matter



how old you are or how much you smoke.

If you are thinking of quitting, visit the Kentucky Cancer Program website at www.kycancerprogram.org.

You also may call Kentucky's Tobacco Quit Line, **1-800-QUIT NOW**, for one-on-one help. For general quit information, go to the National Cancer Institute's website, www.smokefree.gov.

- Have your home tested for radon. Call the Kentucky Radon Program at (502) 564-4856 or your local health department for more information and a free radon test kit.
- Avoid being around secondhand smoke.

Are chewing tobacco, snus, and snuff safe substitutes for cigarettes?

Chewing tobacco, snus and snuff are **NOT** safe substitutes for cigarettes. Smokeless tobaccos are linked to other cancers and oral diseases.

Tobacco use also increases the risk for cancers of the mouth, lips, larynx (voice box), pharynx (throat), esophagus (swallowing tube), stomach, pancreas, kidney, bladder, uterus, cervix, colon/rectum, ovary and acute myeloid leukemia.

What if I can't afford the tests?

Due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), patients may be eligible for lung cancer screening at no out-of-pocket

cost. Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance will cover annual screenings for those who meet the at-risk requirements. For more detailed information, view the ACA and Cancer Health Professional and Public Factsheets available at www.kycancerc.org.

Where can I get more information?

KCP's online, searchable guide, **Pathfinder**, may help you find additional financial, treatment, and cancer support resources in your community. Visit www.kycancerprogram.org and click on the Pathfinder link. You may also contact your local **Kentucky Cancer Program** office.

For information on all types of cancer, contact:

- **National Cancer Institute**, **1-800-4-CANCER**, www.cancer.gov
- **American Cancer Society**, **1-800-ACS-2345**, www.cancer.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, www.cdc.gov

This fact sheet was developed by the Kentucky Cancer Program at the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center. The information comes from the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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www.kycancerprogram.org

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