

# 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 has one of the highest rates of lung cancer cases and lung cancer deaths compared to other states.

## What causes lung cancer?

Smoking (cigarettes, cigars, pipes) is by far the biggest risk factor for lung cancer. It causes over 85 percent of all 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 a personal or family history of the disease and exposure to some substances where we live and work. Some of these substances are asbestos, arsenic, chromium, and silica.

## What are symptoms of lung cancer?

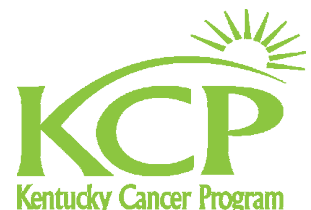
Early lung cancer may not cause any symptoms. Doing all you can to prevent the disease is important.

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. These symptoms can be 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 an imaging procedure that can help your doctor see tumors or growths. 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, you may be a candidate for a low-dose CT scan.

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



### What if I can't afford the tests?

Because of the Affordable Care Act, patients may be eligible for lung cancer screening at no out-of-pocket cost through their health care provider. 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](http://www.kycancerc.org).

### How can I reduce 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.

Chewing tobacco, snus and snuff are NOT safe substitutes for cigarettes. These forms of smokeless tobacco are linked to other cancers and oral diseases.

Besides lung cancer, 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.

To learn about tobacco cessation resources, visit the Kentucky Cancer Program website at [www.kycancerprogram.org](http://www.kycancerprogram.org).

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The Kentucky Cancer Program is jointly administered by the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center and the University of Louisville Brown Cancer Center.

You also may call Kentucky's Tobacco Quit Line, **1-800-QUIT NOW**, for one-on-one counseling.

- 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.

### Where can I get more information?

Visit [www.kycancerprogram.org](http://www.kycancerprogram.org) for cancer resources in your community, and contact information to reach your local **Kentucky Cancer Program** office.

For information on all types of cancer, contact:

- **National Cancer Institute, 1-800-4-CANCER, [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)**
- **American Cancer Society, 1-800-ACS-2345, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://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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