



Lung Cancer Prevention

Experts have identified several causes of lung cancer. Most lung cancers are caused by the use of tobacco. Changing your lifestyle can, over time, gradually reduce some of your risk factors for developing lung cancer.

Tobacco

Tobacco use is the leading cause of lung cancer. More than 85% of lung cancers are caused by smoking. Secondhand smoke is also a risk factor for lung cancer.

To prevent lung and other cancers, do not use tobacco. If you do use tobacco, you can reduce your risk of developing lung cancer by quitting. Your risk will gradually decrease over 10 to 15 years as your lungs recover. Quitting smoking reduces your risk for developing cancer and your risk continues to decrease as long as you do not smoke. The benefit of quitting smoking is greater the younger you quit.

Even cutting down how much you smoke may reduce your risk (but not as much as quitting completely). In one study, cutting in half the number of cigarettes smoked each day significantly reduced the risk of getting lung cancer during a 5 to 10 year period.

If you live with a smoker, you have 2 to 3 times the risk of developing lung cancer compared with a person who lives in a nonsmoking environment. About 25% of nonsmokers who develop lung cancer probably get it from being exposed to secondhand smoke.

Several products, such as nicotine gum, medicated nicotine sprays or inhalers, nicotine patches, and an oral medication (bupropion), are available to help you to quit smoking.

Other exposure risk factors

Other things that increase your risk of lung cancer include asbestos and radon exposure. Certain occupations, such as mining and farming, expose people to fumes, radioactive dust, or other chemicals that may be harmful. Taking precautions to reduce your exposure to harmful substances in your environment can reduce your risk of developing lung cancer.

Diet

Recent studies on the connection between diet and lung cancer have shown mixed results. One study shows that eating a diet rich in nutrients called phytoestrogens may help reduce your risk of lung cancer. Phytoestrogens are found in a wide variety of whole grains, legumes such as chickpeas, vegetables, and soy products. Other research shows that taking supplements of beta-carotene and other vitamins may actually be harmful and increase the risk of lung cancer in people who continue to smoke.

Chemoprevention

Chemoprevention, which is the use of specific medications to reverse, suppress, or prevent cancer growth, is being studied for lung cancer. Chemoprevention has shown some effectiveness in other types of cancers. The results of several large studies on beta-carotene (a vitamin A derivative) use show that this vitamin supplement may actually increase the risk for lung cancer in smokers. Researchers and doctors are very interested in vaccines for lung cancer. So far, a vaccine to prevent or treat lung cancer has not been found, but research continues.

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