



**Health
MATTERS**



UNDERSTANDING LUNG CANCER

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, among both men and women, claiming more lives each year than do colon, prostate, ovarian and breast cancers combined.

Lung cancer happens when there is uncontrolled cell growth in tissues of the lung. Left untreated, this growth can spread beyond the lung (in a process called metastasis) into nearby tissue or other parts of the body. The most common symptoms are coughing, weight loss and shortness of breath.

WHO IS AT THE GREATEST RISK OF LUNG CANCER?

People who smoke have the greatest risk of lung cancer. That risk increases with the length of time and number of cigarettes smoked. People who quit smoking, even after many years, significantly reduce the chances of developing lung cancer. Other possible but less frequent causes of lung cancer include radon, hazardous chemicals, and particle pollution.

To diagnose lung cancer, physicians use information revealed by symptoms as well as several other procedures, such as chest X-rays, bronchoscopy (a thin tube with a camera on one end), CT scans, and MRIs.

Some doctors also conduct a physical examination, a chest examination, and an analysis of blood in the sputum. All of these procedures are designed to detect the location of the tumor and what additional organs may be affected by it.

There are two major types of lung cancer, non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer. The stages of lung cancer are based on whether the cancer is local or has spread from the lungs to the lymph nodes or other organs.

Because the lungs are large, tumors can grow in them for a long time before they are found. Even when symptoms do occur, people think they are due to other causes. For this reason, early-stage lung cancer (stages I and II) is difficult to detect. Most people with lung cancer are diagnosed at stages III and IV.

In addition, about 25 percent of all lung cancer patients have no symptoms when the cancer is diagnosed. These cancers are usually identified when a chest X-ray is performed for another reason. The other 75 percent of patients develop symptoms that alert their physicians to the prospect of lung cancer.

HOW CAN I PREVENT LUNG CANCER?

A smoking cessation program, in tandem with routine medical check-ups, is the best way to prevent lung cancer. If you have been diagnosed with lung cancer, or have questions about a treatment plan, Best Doctors can help!

DID YOU KNOW?

Best Doctors is a confidential benefit offered by your employer at no cost to you

34% of Best Doctors' cases see a change in diagnosis, and 68% see a change in treatment

**Facing a medical decision? Best Doctors is here to help.
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