

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer develops in the tissues of the lung, usually in the cells lining air passages. Lung cancer is responsible for the most cancer-related deaths in both men and women in Texas. The most common type of lung cancer, non-small cell lung cancer, accounts for approximately 85 to 90 percent of lung cancers. Although lung cancer can be treated and is often preventable, the survival rate for this type of cancer is one of the lowest, with only 15 percent of people living more than five years beyond their initial diagnosis.

Statistics

- Lung cancer is the deadliest cancer in Texas, and each year kills more people than colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined.
- In 2010, an estimated 14,358 new lung cancer cases will be diagnosed in Texas, and 10,625 Texans are expected to die from the disease.
- Nearly 87 percent of all lung cancer deaths are attributed to tobacco use.
- Men who smoke are 23 times more likely to develop lung cancer. Women who smoke are 13 times more likely to develop lung cancer.

Risk Factors

- **Smoking:** Tobacco smoke is the most important risk factor for lung cancer, as it is the cause of most lung cancer cases. Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer in nonsmokers. The more a person is exposed to smoke, the greater their risk of developing lung cancer.
- **Age:** People over 65 are more likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer.
- **Family and/or Personal History:** People with a parent or sibling who had lung cancer have a higher than average risk of developing the disease, even if they are nonsmokers. Also, lung cancer patients are at increased risk of developing a second lung tumor.
- **Exposure:** People who live or work in certain conditions where they are exposed to radioactive gas, asbestos, arsenic, soot, tar, radon, and other substances have an increased risk of lung cancer.

Symptoms

Lung cancer symptoms vary with each patient. People with these symptoms should consult their physician:

- Constant chest pain
- Coughing up blood or a cough that won't go away
- Breathing trouble, such as shortness of breath
- Shoulder pain with numbness in some fingers
- Frequent lung infections, such as pneumonia
- Weight loss with no known cause

Prevention

- **Do not smoke.** Smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer.
- **Avoid secondhand smoke.** Approximately 3,400 adult nonsmokers die in the United States each year from lung cancer as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- **Take precautions at work.** Exposure to certain fumes, dust, and chemicals can cause lung cancer.
- **Test your home for radon.** Radon is a radioactive gas that cannot be seen, felt, smelled, or tasted. Homes built over natural deposits of uranium, which occur in the soil, can create high levels of indoor radon exposure, increasing the risk for lung cancer.

Treatment Options

Lung cancer, depending on the stage, may be treated by a team of specialists, including pulmonologists, thoracic surgeons, medical oncologists, and radiation oncologists. Consultation with each of these specialists is encouraged where appropriate. The odds of recovery and treatment options vary widely depending on the stage and type of the cancer, the patient's symptoms and overall health, and a variety of other factors. Unfortunately, most current treatments are unable to completely cure lung cancer. However, many clinical trials are studying lung cancer and may be available to patients.

Sources: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, and Texas Cancer Registry