



## Do You Need Lung Cancer Screening?

### How to know if lung cancer screening is right for you

Screening for lung cancer uses a test that helps find abnormal areas in the lungs that may be cancer. Research shows that screening certain people at higher risk may help decrease their risk of dying from lung cancer.

If you currently smoke or have quit in the last 15 years, are 50 to 80 years old and are in fairly good health, you might benefit from screening for lung cancer with a yearly low-dose CT scan (LDCT). The American Cancer Society recommends screening for certain people at higher risk for lung cancer. Talk to a health care provider about your risk of lung cancer, and about the possible benefits, limitations, and harms of getting tested for early lung cancer.

### How an LDCT scan works

An LDCT scan, or low-dose computed tomography scan, is the test used to screen for lung cancer.

This test shows pictures of a slice, or cross-section, of your lungs. It shows more detail than an x-ray. An LDCT scan can help find abnormal areas that might be cancer and can show a tumor's shape and size. These problems often look like spots on the scan.

LDCT scans expose people to a small amount of radiation with each test. Talk to your doctor about this if you are thinking about your risk for lung cancer and whether to be screened.

### What it's like to get an LDCT scan

The scan is painless and usually takes a few minutes once you're in the machine. You may be asked to undress and put on a gown. You'll need to take off any clothing or objects with metal, such as zippers, underwire bras, jewelry, or piercings.

A radiology technologist does the LDCT scan. Let the technologist know if you have a pacemaker or other implanted medical devices. You would still be able to have an LDCT scan, but extra care would be taken.

The scanner is a big, ring-shaped machine. You lie on a thin, flat table that slides back and forth inside the hole in the middle of the scanner. You'll be asked to hold your breath for a short time. You'll hear buzzing and clicking as the scanner switches on and off. The scan is painless and takes just a few minutes.

You'll be alone in the exam room during the LDCT scan, but the technologist will be able to see, hear, and talk to you at all times.

The machine has size restrictions for patients. People who are very overweight may have trouble getting an LDCT scan.

## Where to go for an LDCT scan

LDCT scans are usually done as an outpatient.

This test should only be done at facilities that have experience in lung cancer screening and treatment.

The facility should have a team of specialists who give patients the right kind of care and follow-up if the test result isn't normal.

Your doctor can help you find an experienced facility. If there is not one near where you live, you may need to travel some distance to be screened.

## Insurance coverage for lung cancer screening

Lung cancer screening is covered by Medicare and by many private health insurance plans. Your health care team can help you find out if your insurance will provide coverage.

## Getting your lung cancer screening test results

After the scan, a radiologist (a doctor who is trained to read LDCT scans) will look at your scan and send the results to your doctor. LDCT scans often show very small areas of tissue in the lung called nodules that end up not being cancer. Still, getting a call that something was found on your scan and that you might need more tests can be scary. Be sure to take time to talk to your doctor to learn more about your results.

## What the screening results mean

Here are some ways the results of an LDCT scan might be reported:

- There are no problems seen in your lungs, or the nodules seen do not look like cancer. You should get another LDCT scan in a year.
- The results are not clear. Your doctor may want to watch you closely and do another LDCT scan soon to look for changes. Ask your doctor what to expect.
- Your LDCT scan shows problems in your lungs that probably are not cancer, but might get worse over time. Talk to your doctor about what you need to do.
- Your LDCT scan shows something in your lungs that may be cancer. You may need more testing to see if it's cancer. Ask your doctor what your next steps will be.

## What you can do to help lower your lung cancer risk

**If you smoke, quit. It's important to know that getting screened for lung cancer does not replace quitting smoking.** Your doctor can talk to you about your risk for lung cancer and can refer you to the help you need. You can also call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit **cancer.org** for tips and resources that can help increase your chances of quitting for good. We're here when you need us.

To learn more, visit [cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early](https://cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early).



[cancer.org](https://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

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