

Lung Cancer Screening Program Frequently Asked Questions

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, responsible for over 160,000 deaths this year. Unfortunately, lung cancer is usually not found until a person develops symptoms, when the cancer is much harder to treat. **The goal of screening is to detect lung cancer at an earlier stage and save lives.**

Who is eligible?

At present, Low Dose CT screening is offered to patients that meet this criteria:

- Between ages 55 to 80 years old
(Medicare/Medicare Managed Care patients age 78-80 are eligible as self-pay)
- Have greater or equal to 30 pack-years of smoking
(*Pack-years = number of packs per day _____ x number of years smoked _____*)
- Are current smokers or have quit within the last 15 years.
- Do not symptoms of a lung condition at the time of screening

Why does it matter if I have symptoms?

Certain symptoms can be a sign that you have a condition in your lungs that should be evaluated and treated, if necessary, by your health care provider. Having any of these symptoms may affect the results of screening. The symptoms which could make you ineligible include:

- Fever
- Chest pain
- A new or changing cough
- New shortness of breath
- Coughing up blood
- Unexplained weight loss

What are the benefits?

- Earlier detection of cancer (1 in 320 lives saved)
- Higher success of treatment.
- Better survival rates (20% reduction in mortality)

What are the risks?

- **Radiation exposure:** LDCT lung screening uses a small amount of radiation to create images of your lung. While radiation can increase a person's risk of cancer, your doctor has determined that the benefits of the screening outweigh the risks of being exposed to the small amount of radiation from this exam.
- **False positives:** LDCT lung screening may find something in the lung that could be cancer but in fact is not. This is called a false positive. In order to make sure these findings are not cancer, additional tests or procedures may be needed that can have potential side effects.
 - Most of the time these findings are lung nodules. Lung nodules are small collections of tissue in the lung. Nodules are very common, and the vast majority—more than 97%—are not cancer. The most suspicious will be referred for more evaluation. Smaller and less concerning nodules can be followed.

- **Additional follow-up tests or procedures:** May include a Chest CT, biopsy, PET/CT or other tests recommended as needed.
- **False negatives:** No test is perfect. It is possible that you may have a medical condition, including lung cancer that is not found during your exam. This is called a false negative.
- **Comorbidities:** You and your doctor may discuss other health issues that could impact your decision to receive the Lung Cancer Screening.

Why is it important to stop smoking?

- The most beneficial tool in reducing lung cancer is to stop smoking.
- Salem Health provides classes and support at the Community Health Education Center (CHEC).

Why should I be screened every year?

- If no abnormalities are found, screening is continued until your age or years of smoking cessation make you ineligible. (See eligibility guidelines above). The primary goal of screening is to detect lung cancer at an earlier stage and save lives.

How much does the screening cost?

- The Lung Cancer Screening is now covered by most insurances as preventative screening at 100%. We suggest you contact your insurance about your specific coverage.

How is the exam performed?

- LDCT (non-contrast) lung screening is one of the easiest screening exams you can have.
- No medications or needles are used.
- You can eat before and after the exam.
- You must be able to hold your breath for at least 6 seconds while the scan is being done.
- Although the actual exam time is about 10 minutes, please allow 45 minutes for the entire screening process.

What can I expect from the results?

- The radiologist will review the LDCT looking for abnormalities that might be suspicious for cancer. If no abnormalities are found, lung cancer screening is continued on an annual basis.
- **Your provider will be notified of your results within 3-5 business days. If you do not receive your results within 2 weeks, please call us at 503-814-1459.**
- If you have questions or concerns after receiving your results and would like to be connected to a nurse navigator, please call us at 503-814-1459.

How can I make an appointment?

Ask your primary care provider to make a referral to the Salem Cancer Institute at 503-814-1459. An appointment will be arranged at your convenience.

Date: _____ Time: _____