



# Lung cancer screening can find cancer early and save your life

In this booklet, you'll learn about:



What lung cancer screening is



How doctors screen for lung cancer with a low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan



Why lung cancer screening is important



The benefits and risks of lung cancer screening



## What is lung cancer screening?

Lung cancer screening is checking for cancer before you have any symptoms. Lung cancer that is found and treated at an early stage has a much better chance of being treated. It is only recommended for people who have a higher risk of getting lung cancer. Your risk is the chance that you will get lung cancer.

To learn if you have a higher risk of getting lung cancer, visit [lungevity.org](http://lungevity.org) and read other booklets in this series.

## How do doctors screen for lung cancer?



To screen for lung cancer, doctors use a **low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan**. It is a type of imaging test that is also called low-dose spiral CT scan or helical CT scan.

### LDCT scans:



Are quick and painless, like having a picture taken



Take pictures of the inside of your body that are much more detailed than chest X-rays



Find smaller lung growths (abnormalities) that could be cancer, compared to chest X-rays

Other common screening tests for cancer:

- Mammogram for breast cancer
- Colonoscopy for colon cancer
- Pap smear for cervical cancer



## Why is lung cancer screening important?

Screening with a yearly LDCT scan is the best way to find lung cancer at an early stage, before it has spread to other parts of the body. When lung cancer is found early, it is easier to treat and survive.

Doctors found that people screened with LDCT over several years had a **20% less chance of dying of lung cancer** than those who were screened with a chest X-ray.

A **clinical trial** is a research study designed to learn how a new treatment or new way to prevent or screen for a disease works.

This was proven in a large **clinical trial**, the National Lung Screening Trial, held from 2000-2015. It looked at how well LDCT screening worked compared to chest X-ray screening for finding lung cancer. It included over 53,000 people who were current and former smokers across the U.S.



## What are the benefits and risks of getting lung cancer screening?

Yearly LDCT screening is the best way to find lung cancer early, before it spreads. As with many screening tests, LDCT has some benefits (possible helps) and risks (possible problems).

### Benefits of LDCT screening

LDCT may:

- Find lung cancer before it has grown or spread to other parts of the body, when it has a much better chance of being treated
- Raise your chance of living longer if you find out you have lung cancer
- Find possible problems other than lung cancer, which you and your doctor can follow up on

- Tell you about your health history, which could raise your family's chance of getting lung cancer
- Lower stress or worry about getting lung cancer



Talk with your doctor to decide if you should have a lung cancer screening, and what you can do to lower your risk of lung cancer.

## Risks of LDCT screening

LDCT may:

- Find possible problems (abnormalities) that doctors may need to check with another scan or a biopsy (taking a tissue sample to check under a microscope). Most of the time, these possible problems are **not** found to be cancer.
- Miss very small cancers or cancers that are hidden behind other structures in the chest, such as the heart.

- Expose you to a small amount of radiation. The amount of radiation from an LDCT is smaller than from a standard CT scan. But each time you have an LDCT it adds to your lifetime dose of radiation.
- Find tumors (abnormal groups of cells that may or may not be cancer) that would not become problems to your health. Some tumors may grow slowly and may not always need treatment.
- Have costs that health insurance may not always cover
- Cause stress or worry while waiting for the scan results

### Also:

- Not all tumors found by LDCT will be at an early stage – it may find cancer at a later stage that has grown or spread
- Getting an LDCT may require traveling to a clinic or hospital that has an LDCT scanner

Visit [LUNGevity.org](https://LUNGevity.org) to learn more about lung cancer screening and find other booklets in this series

**Booklet 1** Learn about lung cancer and your risk of getting it

**Booklet 3** Should you get screening for lung cancer? Talk with your doctor to decide

**Booklet 4** Lung cancer screening and health insurance: Know what insurance will cover

**Booklet 5** Prepare for your lung cancer screening: What to expect during a low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan

**Booklet 6** After your lung cancer screening: Understand your low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan results and next steps



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