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LUNG CANCER

When a person has lung cancer, cells in the lungs grow out of control.[1] The two main types are small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer. These types are diagnosed based on how the cells look under a microscope and are treated differently.[2]

Prevalence

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in the world and is the leading cause of cancer death in men and women in the United States.[3] Each year, about 200,000 people in the United States are told they have lung cancer and more than 150,000 people die from this disease.[4] More people die from lung cancer than from any other kind of cancer. *More women die each year of lung cancer than breast cancer.*[1]

Risk Factors

Research has found several causes and risk factors for lung cancer, including:

- Smoking – tobacco use causes most cases of lung cancer [2]
- Exposure to secondhand smoke from other people's cigarettes [2]
- Radon gas in the home [4]
- Things around home or work, including asbestos, ionizing radiation, and other cancer-causing substances [4]
- Medical exposure to radiation to the chest [4]
- Chronic lung disease such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis [4]
- High levels of air pollution [2]
- Family history of lung cancer [2]
- Increased age – most people are older than 65 years when diagnosed with lung cancer [2]

Symptoms

Early lung cancer may not cause any symptoms, but may include: [5]

- Chest pain
- Cough that does not go away
- Coughing up blood
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing

Screening Methods

There is not a definitive screening test as of now. Several methods of detecting lung cancer have been studied as possible screening tests. These include chest x-rays or scans to check for spots on the lungs and tests of sputum (mucus brought up from the lungs by coughing).[1]

Treatment

Lung cancer is treated in several ways, depending on the type of lung cancer and how far it has spread. Treatments include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. People with lung cancer often get more than one kind of treatment. Some people with lung cancer may want to take part in a clinical trial. Clinical trials study new potential treatment options.[4]

Prevention

You can reduce your risk of developing lung cancer in several ways.[4]

- Don't smoke. If you do smoke, quit now.
- Avoid secondhand smoke. There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure.
- Have your home tested for radon and take corrective actions if high levels are found.
- Avoid unnecessary medical tests that involve X-ray images of the chest.
- Follow health and safety guidelines in the workplace.

Smoking Interventions

Most smokers have tried three or more times before successfully quitting. Smokers go through various stages between thinking about quitting and doing it, so interventions need to be tailored to the appropriate stage. There are numerous programs available as well as the California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO BUTTS).

Be Active, Eat Smart, Don't Smoke, Get Checked!
Prevention Matters!

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[1] Lung Cancer, Department of Health & Human Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Office of Women's Health. Retrieved from http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ByAudience/ForWomen/UCM121895.pdf

[2] What You Need to Know About ™ Lung Cancer, National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 07-1553

[3] Lung Cancer, Medline Plus, U.S. National Library of Medicine, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/lungcancer.html

[4] Lung Cancer Awareness, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Diseases Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Cancer Prevention and Control. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/features/lungcancer/

[5] Lung Cancer, A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia, PubMed Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0004529/