

LUNG CANCER, SCREENING & TREATMENT FOR TOBACCO USE



How does smoking impact your risk for lung cancer?

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Nine out of every ten deaths from lung cancer are due to smoking.

Risk for lung cancer increases the longer and the more cigarettes per day you have smoked. While tobacco companies may market them as lower risk, using products like low-tar cigarettes does not reduce your risk for lung cancer.

How does smoking cause lung cancer and affect cancer treatment?

When you smoke, you inhale harmful gases and particles into your lungs, including chemicals known to cause cancer. When cells in your lungs are damaged, they can start to grow uncontrolled, leading to lung cancer. Smoking also harms your immune system's ability to detect and attack tumor cells.

If you are diagnosed with lung cancer, continuing to smoke can:

- Increase how quickly a cancer tumor grows,
- Cause poorer response to chemotherapy and other cancer treatment, and
- Increase risk of death from lung cancer.

How will quitting smoking and lung cancer screening reduce my risk for lung cancer death?

Stopping smoking is the single most important change you can make to reduce your risk of dying from lung cancer. It is also the only way to reduce the chance of lung cancer developing in the first place.

Your doctor may recommend lung cancer screening if you have a high risk of developing lung cancer. Screening may detect lung cancer earlier when it is more treatable. Earlier detection can reduce your risk of dying from lung cancer.

People who stop smoking:

- Reduce their risk of lung cancer. After 10-15 years, your risk is half that of someone who continued smoking.
- Are less likely to die from other smoking-related cancers or diseases like heart attack or stroke.
- Improve their treatment outcomes and survival if they are diagnosed with lung cancer. If you need surgery, you will heal better, with fewer surgery-related problems.

I want to stop smoking — how do I get started?

- Talk to your VA lung cancer screening coordinator, oncologist or primary care provider about cessation medications and counseling to treat your tobacco use.
- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday. Available in English & Spanish.
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program — text the word VET to 47848 (manda VETesp al 47848 para ayuda en español) or visit smokefree.gov/VET.

