PATIENT HANDOUT: Please feel free to copy this page

LUNG CANCER SCREENING: IS IT FOR YOU?

Who should be screened for lung cancer?

The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) recommends screening for those adults who meet all of the following criteria:

- 55- to 74-years of age.
- Smoke currently or former smokers who quit within the last 15 years.
- Have smoked one pack of cigarettes a day for at least 30 years or an equal amount: for example two packs a day for 15 years.

Screening is *not* recommended for people who do not meet the criteria above. Also, screening should *not* be done in people who:

- Have had lung cancer before.
- Have symptoms that might suggest lung cancer – for example, a cough that doesn't go away or gets worse, coughing up blood or rust-coloured spit, chest pain that is worse with deep breathing, coughing or laughing, shortness of breath, weakness and tiredness.

How often should screening be done?

The CTFPHC recommends screening once a year for three years in a row.

How is screening done?

The CTFPHC recommends that screening for lung cancer be done with low-dose computed tomography (low-dose CT). This highly detailed scan of your lungs is far better than a chest x-ray in picking up lung cancer at an early stage when it can be better treated. Studies have found that screening with a chest x-ray doesn't find cancer early and does not improve the chances of survival after lung cancer treatment.

Is radiation from low-dose CTs a concern?

As its name suggests the low-dose CT screens with a lower dose of radiation than standard CT. A large study looking at lung cancer screening using low-dose CT found that the amount of radiation patients received was similar to the amount of radiation Canadians are exposed to each year from naturally-occurring radiation in rocks, soil and from outer space.

Radiation does increase a person's chance of developing cancer, so it's important to keep the amount of radiation from medical tests as low as possible. But keep in mind that the benefit of being screened with low-dose CT scans (preventing death from lung cancer) is much higher than the chances of harm from the radiation of a low-dose CT scanner.

How do I know if lung cancer screening is right for me?

If you meet the criteria for lung cancer screening (outlined above), talk to you doctor about both the benefits and harms of screening. The websites below may also help you decide:

- **http://canadiantaskforce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ctfphclung-cancerharms-and-benefitsfinal.pdf**
- **https://www.uptodate.com/contents/image?imageKey=ONC%2F110643**
- **http://patient.info/decision-aids/lung-cancer-screening-yes-or-no**

Sources: 1) Lung Cancer Screening: Patient Tool – Benefits vs Harms. Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care. 2016; **2)** Exposure to Ionizing Radiation Fact Sheet. Health Canada. 2012. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-concerns/emergencies-disasters/emergency-response/nuclear-emergency-response/exposure-ionizing-radiation-fact-sheet.html