

# Lung Cancer Screening – Should I be Screened?

## A Patient Information Guide



Nashoba Valley Medical Center  
Low-Dose CT Lung Screening  
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**Nashoba Valley  
Medical Center**

A STEWARD FAMILY HOSPITAL



Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S., with more people dying of lung cancer than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. The goal of Low-Dose CT lung cancer screening is to detect lung cancer when it is very small, before it has spread to other sites in the body.

## What is Lung Cancer Screening?

Lung cancer screening looks for signs of this disease before there are any symptoms in patients who are at high risk. Modeled after mammography, which has been successful in detecting breast cancer, Low-Dose CT lung cancer screening uses state-of-the-art computed tomography (CT) to take pictures of the lungs to detect potentially treatable lung cancers.

Annual lung cancer screening by Low-Dose CT in those that qualify has been proven to reduce the chances of dying from lung cancer by 20 percent.

## Should I be Screened for Lung Cancer?

Nationally, it has been determined that Low-Dose CT lung cancer screening should be offered annually to adults who meet the following criteria:

- Between the ages of 55-77\*
- Asymptomatic with no signs or symptoms of lung cancer. No major medical problems that would prevent cancer work-up and treatments if discovered during screening
- Current smoker or quit smoking within the past 15 years
- Tobacco smoking history of 30+ pack years

## Calculate Pack-Years

(20 cigarettes = 1 pack)

<input type="text"/>	x	<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Number of years smoked		Average number of packs smoked per day		Pack-years

Before scheduling a Low-Dose CT lung cancer screening, please speak with your primary care physician or pulmonologist on whether the test will be beneficial.

\*Some private insurance covers ages 55-80. Please check your plan for coverage.



## What are the Risks of Low-Dose CT Lung Cancer Screening?

Any cancer screening program will result in occasional false positive results (false alarms), and a potential over diagnosis (identifying slow-growing cancers that would not have ever been detected had the screening study not been performed). Additionally there are concerns about radiation exposure. Low-Dose CT lung cancer screening uses the most advanced CT technology, which means the radiation used is very low. The radiation dose is less than half of the average annual radiation received by those living in the United States.

## What is a CT Scan and How do I Prepare for the Exam?

The screening chest CT is an imaging exam that uses X-rays guided by a computer to take cross-sectional images of the body, which shows detailed images of any part of the body. No preparation is needed and it takes 15 minutes to complete, including prep time. If you have had prior chest CT scans, notify your doctor and obtain copies because the radiologist can use them to tell if a finding is new or stable.

If you meet these criteria or have questions about your risk, talk to your physician or call 978-784-9270.

## Can I Avoid Smoking and Reduce my Lung Cancer Risk?

If you are a current smoker, the best action you can take to reduce your risk of lung cancer is to stop smoking. It is more effective than any test or intervention to reduce your risk. If you have already quit smoking, please understand that it takes 15 years to reduce your risk of lung cancer death to that of a non-smoker. Quitting smoking decreases your risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Lung infections
- Heart attack
- High carbon monoxide levels in the blood
- Coughing, sinus infection, fatigue and shortness of breath

If you would like more information or would like to know if you qualify, talk to your primary care physician. You can also contact the free and confidential Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit [makesmokinghistory.org](http://makesmokinghistory.org).