

An Overview of Lung Cancer

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What is Lung Cancer?

Lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. in both men and women.

170,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

What are the causes of lung cancer?

- Smoking is the leading cause
- 10-15 percent of lung cancer is diagnosed in non-smokers
- Females of Asian descent are at greater risk
- Radon, second-hand smoke and other environmental factors

What are the Symptoms and How is it Diagnosed?

Half of all new cases involve metastatic lung cancer where the disease has spread from its original site. Symptoms are:

- Cough, shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- Wheezing
- Whole-body symptoms — weight loss, general weakness, severe fatigue

Sometimes cancer is found early on an X-ray or CT scan before these symptoms develop.

What are the Subtypes of Lung Cancer?

While there is only one type of small cell lung cancer, non-small cell lung cancer has several types, including:

- Adenocarcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Large cell carcinoma
- Large cell neuroendocrine carcinoma

Treatments Include:

- Surgery – typically for non-small cell lung cancer
- Chemotherapy – often used as a systemic or whole-body approach to target the cancer
- Radiation – sometimes necessary as well

Staging of Lung Cancer:

Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer

- Stage 1: does not involve lymph nodes
- Stage 2: involves lymph nodes and may involve rib or chest wall
- Stage 3: cancer has spread to lymph nodes in mid-chest
- Stage 4: metastatic cancer has spread through bloodstream to other parts of the body

Small Cell Lung Cancer

- Limited Stage: present in one-third of cases, cancer is confined to just one side of the chest
- Extensive Stage: present in two-thirds of cases; occurs when cancer has spread to other parts of the body

What are Treatment Outcomes I Can Expect?

- Individual outcomes vary
- Cure rates for lung cancer remain below 20 percent
- Even though a cure may not be possible, palliative care can improve survival rates and quality of life

Clinical Trials and Future Treatments

- New medications are being developed
- Radiation treatments continue to improve results
- Surgical techniques are being refined
- The Swedish Cancer Institute is committed to clinical trials which provide new treatment approaches and better clinical outcomes for lung cancer patients