What is the Lung Cancer Screening Program?

If caught early, lung cancer can be cured. The Lung Cancer Screening Program uses a special type of chest X-ray called a CT scan to find early lung cancer. If you currently smoke cigarettes, the program also tries to help you stop smoking, because smoking is the number one cause of lung cancer.

When is screening recommended?
Screening looks for a disease before a person has symptoms. Screening is recommended if the person has high risk for disease, but has no symptoms of the disease.

Who should consider participating in the Lung Cancer Screening Program?
If you have all three of these risks (see below) experts recommend lung cancer screening.

- You are 55 to 77 years old
- You are a current or former smoker, with at least 30 pack-years of smoking
  - Pack years are determined by the number of cigarette packs per day multiplied by the number of years you smoked.
- You are a former smoker, who quit within the past 15 years.

What happens in the Lung Cancer Screening Program?
You will meet with a trained Nurse Practitioner to discuss the Lung Cancer Screening Program. Then you can decide if you would like to get screening.

The CT scan
- If you decide to be screened, a CT scan of the chest will be scheduled or completed during the visit.
  - During the CT scan you will lie flat on the CT table and the machine scans over your chest during one breath hold. It is simple, easy and does not hurt.
You will come back 1 week later to discuss the results of the CT scan and the follow-up plans. You will also receive a letter with the results of the scan. Your referring doctor will receive the same letter.

The CT scan and follow-up visit will be repeated every year. You will receive a reminder letter to schedule the yearly visit and CT scan.

**Giving Up Smoking**
- If you are currently smoke or you are trying to give up smoking the Nurse Practitioner will discuss ways to help you give up smoking.
- You can have follow-up appointments to help you give up smoking.

**Who should not get screening?**
You are not likely to benefit from screening if
- You are younger than 55, or older than 79
- You smoked less than 30 pack-years or quit smoking more than 15 years ago
- You do not want to complete the lung cancer screening every year
- You are not interested in treatment if lung cancer is detected during the screening
- You already have symptoms of possible lung cancer.

**What if you have possible symptoms of lung cancer?**
Symptoms of lung cancer include:
- A new cough
- A change in a chronic cough
- Coughing up blood
- Weight loss without trying.

If you have these symptoms you will need to be seen by a pulmonary doctor.

**How long will you be involved in the Lung Cancer Screening Program?**
You will have yearly CT scans and follow-up visits until you reach age 77 years under Medicare (or 79 years with private insurance), or it has been more than 15 years since you quit smoking.

**What is the cost of the Lung Cancer Screening Program?**
Private insurance and Medicare (expected soon) have approved the Lung Cancer Screening Program without a co-pay (in other words, it is free to you). If you do not have insurance, the CT scan will cost you $250.00. If the CT scan is abnormal, you or your insurance company may have to pay for additional medical tests or treatment.

**Frequently Asked Questions**
These are questions people often ask about the Lung Cancer Screening Program.

**I have a lung nodule. Is this worrisome?**
- A lung nodule is a small rounded spot that looks like a white shadow on the CT scan.
- Lung nodules are common. More than 9 out of 10 lung nodules are not cancerous, and will stay the same size, get smaller, or disappear. However, early lung cancer looks like a lung nodule. A follow-up CT scan can show if the nodule is getting
bigger. If a nodule gets bigger, it is more likely to be cancer.

The goal of Lung Cancer Screening Program is to identify lung cancer when it is small and at an early curable stage.

I have a suspicious lung nodule. What will happen next?
If you have a lung nodule suspicious for early lung cancer, we will discuss it with you at the one week follow up visit. You can be referred to one of the National Jewish Health lung specialists, or your regular doctor can help to coordinate the next steps. A suspicious lung nodule is typically large in size, has irregular borders and demonstrates growth over time. Diagnostic tests may be needed--such as special CT scans, lung biopsy, or surgery.

What if non-lung abnormalities are found on the CT scan?
The chest CT looks at the thyroid gland, and part of the kidneys and liver. Sometimes abnormalities show up that need more testing to make sure they are not serious health problems. If you like, National Jewish Health specialists can do the testing needed or you can follow-up for tests with your Primary Care Doctor.

What are the harms of getting a screening CT?
A screening CT exposes you to radiation. (see below). Lung cancer screening CT may show abnormalities that lead to more imaging studies, medical tests, and costs to you or your insurance company.

Is the radiation I’m exposed to during a CT scan a concern?
Many imaging tests expose a person to radiation. This exposure is higher than background natural radiation. While there is no firm evidence that radiation from CT exams causes cancer, there is concern that increased radiation exposure may lead to increased cancer risk.

The Lung Cancer Screening CT scans at National Jewish Health are performed at the lowest dose possible and is considered to be very safe.

Questions to ask my health care provider
If you have further questions please ask. You can also call 877.713.5066.
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