Patient Information

Low Dose CT Lung Cancer Screening Program

There are some risks and limits in performing Low Dose Computer Tomography (LDCT) lung screening. We want to make sure that we have done a good job explaining these to you, so please let us know if you have any questions.

Radiation exposure

LDCT lung screening uses radiation to create pictures of your lungs. Radiation can increase a person’s risk of cancer. The amount of radiation in LDCT lung screening is small—about the same amount a person would receive from a screening mammogram.

False negatives

No test is perfect. This includes the LDCT lung screening. You may have lung cancer or other medical conditions not found during your screening. This is a false negative.

False positives/additional testing

Your LDCT lung screening may find something in the lungs that it detects as possible cancer, when in fact it is not. This is a false positive. False positive tests can often cause anxiety. In order to make sure these findings are not cancer, you may need to have more tests done, but only with your approval. Sometimes patients need a procedure, such as a biopsy, that can cause possible problems.

Findings not related to lung cancer

Your LDCT lung screening exam also takes pictures of parts of your body next to or near your lungs. In a small number of cases (5-10%), the CT scan will show an abnormal finding in the area of your kidneys, adrenal glands, liver, thyroid, or other parts of your body. These findings may not be serious. However, you may need further examination. See your doctor to decide if you need more testing.

How do you perform an LDCT screening?

LDCT lung screening is one of the easiest screening exams you can have. The exam takes less than 60 seconds. No medicines are given, and no needles are used. You can eat before and after the exam. You do not even need to change your clothes, as long as the clothing on your chest does not have metal in it. However, you must be able to hold your breath for at least 10 seconds while the chest scan takes place.
When will I get the results of this test?

A radiologist reads all screening LDCT scans before reporting the results. You and your doctor will usually receive your results within 5-7 days.

Ongoing Screening

The lung cancer screening program decreases the death rate for lung cancer by 20%. However, it is only helpful if you continue to have the LDCT scan done yearly. It is a commitment to your health.

Smoking Cessation

Smoking is the biggest risk factor for getting lung cancer. If you are ready to quit smoking and decrease that risk, we have tools available to help you. If you have already quit smoking, keep up the good work!