

Lung Cancer Screening

What is a Low-dose Lung Screening Test?

A low-dose lung screening test is done to find lung cancer early, when treatment works better.

This screening test is done with a CT (computed tomography) exam.

A CT exam uses X-ray and a computer to get an in-depth look at your entire chest. The result is an image that provides a clear and detailed picture of your lungs.

This exam uses low doses of radiation. You will not need an intravenous (IV) line and contrast will not be used.

What are the Benefits of the Screening Test?

Many people who are diagnosed with lung cancer die because it is found at a late stage. This screening helps to find lung cancer at an early stage so treatment options are more successful.

Research has shown a 20 percent decrease in lung cancer deaths in heavy smokers who received a low-dose lung screening test.

Are There Any Risks with the Screening Test?

- There is some radiation exposure with this type of CT exam. These levels are still considered safe. A CT exam can find small nodules or growths. Only 3 or 4 small nodules for every 100 lung nodules found are cancer (after more testing).

- The screening may be a false-positive. This happens when something looks like cancer but is not. This can cause you to be anxious until you know for sure that it is not cancer.

Who Should Have the Screening Test?

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recommends lung screening if you are between the ages of 50 and 77 if all the criteria below apply to you:

- You have no signs or symptoms of lung cancer (coughing up blood, trouble breathing, lots of infections, fatigue and unexpected weight loss).
- You have a history of heavy smoking (20-pack-year history). This means that you have smoked the equivalent of 1 pack of cigarettes each day for 20 years or 2 packs each day for 10 years.
- You smoke now or have quit within the last 15 years.

Check with your insurance provider if you can get screening until age 80.

(over)

What Happens Before the Test?

You will have a shared decision making conversation with a health care provider. During this visit you will talk about:

- the benefits and risks of a screening
- your preferences and values around screening
- the need to and how to quit smoking
- what the possible results can be and how you are informed of the results
- possible recommendations
- need for yearly screenings.

How Do You Schedule a Screening Test?

Talk with your health care provider. They can refer you for lung cancer screening if they think a screening test is right for you. With this referral, a scheduler will contact you to set up an appointment.

How Do You Pay for the Screening Test?

It is important to understand your health care benefits before having this test.

Allina Health will get a prior-authorization as part of the referral process, but you should still call your insurance provider to understand what your policy will cover.

Low-dose lung screening is approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Some insurance providers do not cover the cost for this test. Call your insurance provider to find out if this test is covered by your health plan. Ask if there are any requirements you need to meet before having the test.

Special note

- Medicare will cover the cost of this screening test for people age 50 to 77 years old. Medicare requires that you talk with your primary care provider to see if this test is right for you.
- If your insurance provider does not cover the cost for this test, please talk to your primary care provider. You may qualify for a discount.

What Will Happen During a CT Scan?

You will lie on a table. A CT scan machine uses a low dose (amount) of radiation to make detailed images of your lungs. The scan only takes a few minutes and is not painful.

You don't need to prepare for the scan.

How Will You Get Your Test Results?

A board-certified radiologist will look at and interpret all scans. A letter will be mailed to you with results and recommendations.

If you have an Allina Health account, you may see the results before your provider.

A copy of your results will be shared with your primary care provider. A health care provider may call you, if needed.

An Allina Health scheduler will contact you to schedule a screening every year as long as you meet the lung cancer screening criteria.

Where Can You Get a Low-dose Lung Screening Test?

There are several Allina Health locations that offer this screening test. Go to account.allinahealth.org/services/697 and click on locations.