

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 may work better.

This screening test is done by doing 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.

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 (growths) in at least 1 out of 4 people who get this test. Most of the nodules are not cancer. Only 3 or 4 for every 100 lung nodules found are cancer.

What are the Benefits of the Screening Test?

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

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

Who Should Have the Screening Test?

Lung cancer screening is recommended if all of the following apply to you.

- You are between the ages of 55 and 80.
- You have no signs or symptoms of lung cancer (coughing up blood, trouble breathing, frequent infections, fatigue and unexpected weight loss).
- You smoke now or have quit within the last 15 years.
- You have a history of heavy smoking (30 pack year history). This means that you have smoked one pack of cigarettes a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years.

How Do You Schedule a Screening Test?

Your primary care provider can refer you to a screening location if he or she thinks a screening test is right for you. With this referral, a scheduler will contact you to set up an appointment.

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How Do You Pay for the Screening Test?

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

Low-dose lung screening is approved by the Food and Drug Administration. However, some insurance providers do not cover the cost for this test.

Please call your insurance provider to find out if this test is covered by your health plan. Be sure to ask if there are any requirements you need to meet before having the test.

Please note:

- Medicare will cover the cost of this screening test for people age 55 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 When Arrive for Your Test?

You will meet with a health care provider from the screening location before your CT exam.

He or she will talk about:

- the risks and benefits of the test
- the importance of following the yearly screening plan
- quitting smoking (if needed)
- following the recommendations after the test.

You will also have time to ask any questions you may have before your test.

How Will You Get Your Test Results?

A board-certified radiologist will look at and interpret all scans.

A health care provider from the screening location will receive the test results. He or she will talk with you about the results and determine the next steps in your screening plan.

A copy of your results will be shared with your primary care provider.

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

There are three Allina Health locations that offer this screening test:

- Virginia Piper Cancer Institute® – Abbott Northwestern Hospital
Minneapolis, Minn.
612-863-7583
- Virginia Piper Cancer Institute® – Mercy Hospital
Coon Rapids, Minn.
763-236-0808
- Virginia Piper Cancer Institute® – United Hospital
St. Paul, Minn.
651-241-5111