

Lung Cancer Screening

Common Questions

This handout will answer some of the most common questions about lung cancer screening — also called low-dose CT or LDCT.

What is lung cancer screening?

- Lung cancer screening is a way to find cancer before it causes symptoms or problems.
- Low-dose CT (LDCT) is a CAT scan used for lung cancer screening that takes pictures of your lungs. Doctors study the pictures to look for signs of cancer.
- Lung cancer screening helps find cancer. It does not prevent it.

Why think about screening?

- Lung cancer is the #1 cause of cancer death for men and women in Maine.
- Most people don't find out they have lung cancer until it has grown and spread. Then it's harder to treat.
- Screening may find lung cancer early, when treatment works better.

Who should think about screening?

Talk with your health care provider about lung cancer screening if you:

- Are between 50–80 years old; and
- Smoke or quit within the last 15 years; and
- Have smoked an amount that is equal to 20 pack years, such as:
 - » 1 pack a day for 20 years, or
 - » 2 packs a day for 10 years

To qualify for screening you have to meet certain criteria. Your health care provider can help decide if you meet the criteria.

What will the screening cost?

If you have insurance:

- Most private and public insurance companies in Maine and New Hampshire will pay for screening, if you qualify. Public insurance means Medicare Part B, MaineCare and New Hampshire Medicaid.
- The details of exactly who qualifies can vary. For example, some insurance plans may cover screening for slightly different ages or pack years.
- If you and your health care provider decide that screening is right for you, call your insurance company and ask what they will cover (pay for) and if there is anything you will have to pay. Be sure to ask about the difference between providers who are “in-network” and “out of network.”

If you plan to pay for it yourself:

- Ask your health care provider’s office how much you will have to pay.
- Be sure to ask for the total cost, including the LDCT scan and any fees, such as facility and reading fees.

Is lung cancer screening right for me?

- Other than quitting smoking, lung cancer screening is the most effective way to lower your risk of dying from lung cancer.
- Lung cancer screening may not help everyone, and is not a perfect test. For example, it can give you a false alarm — a result that looks like cancer but is not cancer. This can cause worry and extra testing.
- You will need to meet with your health care provider to talk about the pros and cons before you can be screened. You will then decide together whether screening is right for you.

What happens during the LDCT scan?

- The scan takes only a few minutes and does not hurt. You do not have to do anything special to get ready for the scan. **You do not have to:**
 - » Change clothes
 - » Swallow dye
 - » Take medicines
 - » Get a shot

- You will lie on a table and raise your arms over your head. You will then hold your breath for 5-10 seconds while the table moves through the CT scanner.

How often will I need to be screened?

- Screening is most effective when it is done every year.
- If the screening results are normal, your doctor will likely ask you to return for another screening in 1 year.

How can I lower my risk of getting lung cancer?

Whatever you decide about screening, quitting smoking is the #1 step to lower your risk of lung cancer.

- Talk with your health care provider.
- In Maine, you can contact the Maine QuitLink at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or mainequitlink.com. Build the plan that works best for you by choosing options such as phone coaching, web based support, texting, and nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges. All of these services are free.
- In New Hampshire, call the national quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. They will connect you with the best local resource.
- Health insurances often cover medications or counseling to help you quit smoking. Call your insurance provider to find out more.

Where can I go for more information?

- Talk with your health care provider
- MaineHealth Cancer Care Network: mainehealth.org/lungcancerscreening
- American Lung Association, Lung Cancer Screening: www.savedbythescan.org

Learn More

mainehealth.org/lungcancerscreening



Adapted with permission from wording developed by the Maine Lung Cancer Coalition.