

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women. More individuals die of lung cancer than of colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined. In 2007, there will be more than 200 000 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed in the United States. About 6 of 10 individuals with lung cancer die within 1 year of their diagnosis. These cancers are generally categorized by cell type, such as **small cell** or **non-small cell carcinomas**. These categories are used for treatment decisions and determining **prognosis** (prospect of recovery). Currently there is no recommended screening test for lung cancer. The March 7, 2007, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about computed tomography (CT) screening for lung cancer.

RISK FACTORS FOR LUNG CANCER

- Smoking—about 87% of lung cancers are related to smoking. The risk increases the longer you smoke and the more cigarettes you smoke each day. Secondhand smoke is also a risk factor.
- Exposure to substances such as arsenic, asbestos, radioactive dust, or radon
- Radiation exposure from work, medical, or environmental sources
- A family history of cancer

SYMPTOMS OF LUNG CANCER

Although most lung cancers do not cause symptoms until cancer has spread, you should report any of the following symptoms to your doctor. Often these symptoms are caused by something other than cancer, but if lung cancer is found, early treatment may relieve symptoms and help you live longer. The most common symptoms are

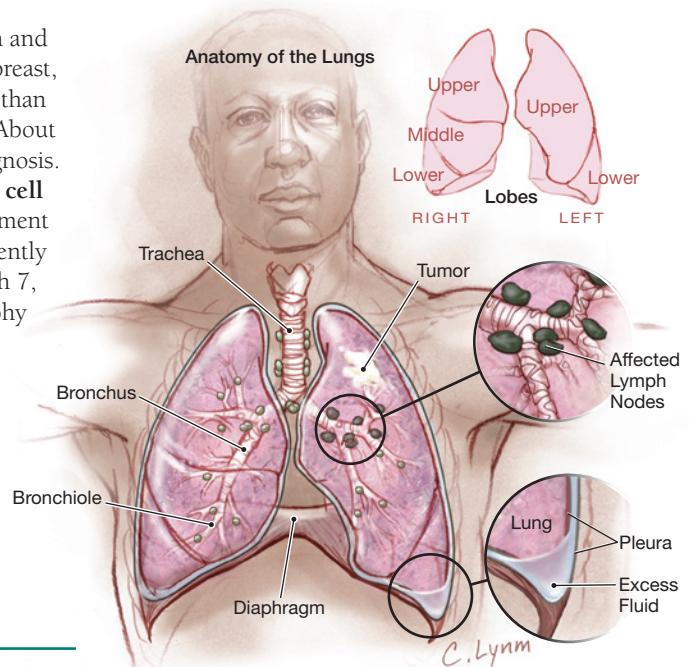
- Persistent cough
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain
- Hoarseness
- Sudden onset of wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Recurrent respiratory infections, such as pneumonia
- Fatigue

TESTS FOR LUNG CANCER

- Thoracentesis—a sample of fluid from around the lungs to evaluate types of cells
- Bronchoscopy—flexible camera to view the airway and take tissue samples
- Computed tomography (CT) scan of the lungs to identify abnormal tissue masses
- Positron emission tomography (PET) scan of the lungs to look for cancer cells
- Bone scan to determine whether the cancer has spread to the bones

TREATMENT OF LUNG CANCER

Many factors must be taken into account to determine the best treatment for an individual diagnosed with lung cancer. The specific type of cell, the location of the lung tumor, the stage of the disease with possible **metastasis** (spread to other parts of the body), and the general health of the individual must be considered. Various treatment plans may include radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and/or surgery.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Cancer Society
www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/lung
- American Lung Association
www.lungusa.org
- The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
www.sts.org/sections/patientinformation/lungthoracicsurgery

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. Many are available in English and Spanish. A previous Patient Page on lung cancer was published in the August 24/31, 2005, issue.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, Society of Thoracic Surgeons

John L. Zeller, MD, PhD, Writer

Cassio Lynn, MA, Illustrator

Richard M. Glass, MD, Editor

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