

**HEALTHY LIVING CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE**  
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***Lung Cancer And What It Means To You***

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According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women. In 2008 there will be 215,020 new cases of lung cancer (both small cell and non-small cell) in the United States. Treatment at early stages of cancer can lead to more treatment options, less invasive surgery and a higher survival rate.

The signs and symptoms of lung cancer can take years to develop and they may not appear until the disease is in the advanced stage. Symptoms that may suggest lung cancer can be a persistent cough, coughing blood, or abnormal findings on your chest X-ray or CT chest. Your physician will determine whether it's from cancer or something else and a board-certified pulmonologist (lung specialist) can assist your physician in finding the correct diagnosis.

Depending where the possible cancer is located, your pulmonologist can discuss different approaches and its risks and benefits. You may benefit most with a CT-guided biopsy if your area of concern is on the periphery of the lungs; however, a bronchoscopy (placing a camera into your lungs) may be more beneficial if your lesion is in the central part of your lungs due to the lower risk of lung collapse.

**Types of Lung Cancer**

Lung cancer is usually divided into two types: non-small cell carcinoma and small-cell carcinoma. The distinction refers to the size of the cells, not the size of the cancer growth.

About 85-90 percent of all lung cancers are classified as non-small cell, which generally grows and spreads more slowly. There are three types of non-small cell carcinoma:

- Squamous cell carcinoma: About 25-30 percent of all lung cancers are squamous cell. This type is linked to smoking and tends to be found in the middle of the lungs, near a bronchus.
- Adenocarcinoma: This type accounts for about 40 percent of lung cancers. It is usually found in the outer part of the lung.
- Large-cell (undifferentiated) carcinoma: About 10-15 percent of lung cancers are this type. It can start in any part of the lung. It tends to grow and spread quickly, which makes it harder to treat.

Small-cell carcinoma accounts for about 25 percent of all cases of lung cancer. It usually starts in one of the breathing tubes. It grows more rapidly and is more likely to spread to other organs than other types of lung cancer.

### **Knowledge is Power**

Knowledge is power against cancer. Here are a few important questions you should consider asking your physician after being diagnosed:

- Which procedure do you recommend? How will the tissue be removed?
- Will I have to stay in the hospital? If so, for how long?
- Are there any risks? What is the chance that the procedure will make my lung collapse? What are the chances of infection or bleeding after the procedure?
- How long will it take me to recover?
- How soon will I know the results? Who will explain them to me?
- If I do have cancer, who will talk to me about next steps? When?

You can also research and learn more about lung cancer by visiting reputable Web sites, such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at *cdc.gov* or the American Cancer Society at *cancer.org*.

### **Treatments**

After your cancer is diagnosed, your physician will refer you to a specialist who has experience in treating lung cancer. You may have a team of specialists including thoracic

(chest) surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pulmonologist and registered dietitians. A multidisciplinary team approach will ensure that you will get the best treatment possible.

Before starting treatment, you might want a second opinion about your diagnosis and treatment plan. Many insurance companies cover a second opinion if you or your physician requests it. In most cases, a brief delay in starting treatment will not make treatment less effective. Sometimes people with lung cancer need treatment right away. For example, a physician may advise a person with small cell lung cancer not to delay treatment more than a week or two.

You'll need regular checkups after treatment for lung cancer. Even when there are no longer any signs of cancer, the disease sometimes returns because undetected cancer cells remained somewhere in your body after treatment.

### **Free Community Lecture**

Sutter Regional Medical Foundation and Sutter Solano Cancer Center will be hosting a free community lecture in November to discuss screenings, diagnosis and treatments. For more information, please call 707-554-5326.

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