

## LUNG CANCER: NOT JUST FOR SMOKERS

While smoking accounts for about 85% of all lung cancers, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) reports that 10–20% of lung cancers in the United States, each year, occur in people who smoked fewer than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime or never smoked at all. In the United States in 2021 there were 131,880 deaths from lung cancer. Of those lung cancer deaths, 112,098 were people who had a long history of smoking or were smokers when diagnosed. **People who never smoked or have smoked less than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime accounted for the other 19,782 lung cancer deaths.**

The two biggest risks factors for developing lung cancer other than smoking are exposure to [secondhand smoke](#) and exposure to radon. Research indicates that secondhand smoke contributes to about 7,300 lung cancer deaths per year and exposure to [radon](#) to about 2,900 of lung cancer deaths in people who never smoked. A smoker who is also exposed to radon has a much higher risk of lung cancer than a smoker who is not exposed to radon. [Radon exposure is an additional factor in over 21,000 lung cancer deaths of high-risk smokers.](#) Additional risk factors for developing lung cancer include long term exposure to air pollution created by heavy traffic, exposure to carcinogens like uranium, asbestos, ionizing radiation and diesel exhaust and genetics.

If you are between ages 50 – 80, currently smoke or have quit within the last 15 years, have a 20 or more pack-year smoking history ([Calculate pack years](#)) and have no history of lung cancer, you are eligible for lung cancer screening. Your risk for developing lung cancer is up to 30X higher than a never smoker's risk, depending on your smoking history. Your survival rate is much lower as well. Catching it in its early stages could save your life.

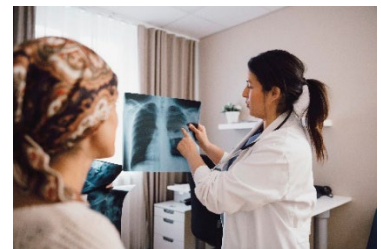
If you are experiencing [symptoms of lung cancer](#), such as a cough that won't go away or coughing up blood; speak to your health care provider immediately. Your physician will likely order an x ray, blood tests or other diagnostic tests. If you are not satisfied with your physician's response and your concerns are not adequately addressed, be persistent or seek a second opinion. You know your body better than anyone and you are likely to know when something is not right. Persistence may save your life. If you are diagnosed with lung cancer, be sure to request biomarker testing. This will determine what type of lung cancer you have and help you and your health care team better understand your lung cancer and determine which treatment options are best for you.

### Prevent lung cancer:

- Do not smoke. If you smoke, STOP. It's never too late. For free help quitting smoking call 1 866 697-8487 or go to: [nysmokefree.com](https://nysmokefree.com) or simply ask your doctor about getting help to quit smoking
- Have your house tested for radon.
- Avoid exposure to known carcinogens.
- Avoid long term exposure to air pollution created by heavy traffic and/or diesel exhaust.

### Increase your chances for staying cancer free:

- Eat a balanced, healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Get the recommended amount of sleep.
- Get recommended cancer screenings.



### Other Resources

[Erie County Healthy Neighborhoods](#)

[Protect Your Family From Radon: A Guide for New York State Residents \(ny.gov\)](#)

[NYS Radon Information](#)