What are Signs of Lung Cancer in Women?

Lung cancer is a common type of cancer seen in women. Here are the important facts about lung cancer that every person should know.

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What is lung cancer and how are women affected?

Lung cancer most commonly occurs in the tissue of the lung. There are two main types of lung cancer: non-small cell and small cell.

Non-small cells make up about 80-85% of lung cancer cases, according to the National Cancer Institute. This type of lung cancer is more common in women than men. Small cell lung cancer is much less common and grows and spreads much faster than non-small cell. Typically, the average age of a lung cancer patient is 65 and older, according to the American Cancer Society.

Lung cancer cases continue to decline, but lung cancer rates in men have declined at a steeper rate than women. Also women who do not smoke have higher rates of getting lung cancer than men who do not smoke, according to recent studies from the American Cancer Society More research is needed to explain the reasoning behind these trends.

What are ways to reduce my risk of getting lung cancer?

Early screenings are an important way to catch any existing cancer as early as possible. If you have a history of tobacco use, talk to your primary care doctor to see if regular cancer screening is an option. Some risk factors include:

- Second-hand smoke exposure
- Air pollution
- Radiation therapy
- Asbestos and radon exposure

Avoiding things like smoking and tobacco use can help, but not completely eradicate the chance of getting lung cancer. In addition, you can check local guidelines for radon testing to be aware of

higher risk areas.

Can I get screened for lung cancer?

For people ages 50 to 80, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends annual screenings if you've had a 20 pack-year smoking history (meaning about a pack a day for 20 years); are a current smoker; or if you've quit within the past 15 years. Screening consists of a low-dose CT scan.

What are the symptoms of lung cancer I should be looking for?

Most lung cancer symptoms match that of a severe chest cold. Other common symptoms include:

- Persistent coughs
- Coughing up blood
- Chest discomfort
- Wheezing
- Reoccurring pneumonia or bronchitis
- Unexplained appetite and weight loss.

If the lung cancer is at a later stage, chest and shoulder pain, yellowing skin, and swelling lymph nodes can be symptoms as well. These symptoms do not always indicate lung cancer, but should be reported to a doctor.

A Pancoast tumor is a type of lung cancer that occurs in the upper portion of the lungs, and can affect the nervous system. The symptoms, often referred to as Horner syndrome, include the drooping of an upper eyelid, a smaller pupil in the same eye, and the prevention of perspiration on a portion of the face. Also, it is often the case that patients have no symptoms.

How do I get tested for lung cancer?

If a medical professional suspects you have lung cancer, further testing including a biopsy can then determine if cancer is present and if so, its stage.

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