



LUNG CANCER CARE

A TEAM APPROACH

CAUSES

Smoking is the number one cause of cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that 80% to 85% of all lung cancer cases in the United States are related to smoking. Exposure to secondhand smoke is also a well-documented cause of lung cancer. More than 3,000 nonsmoking adults die of lung cancer each year as a result of breathing secondhand smoke.

Any kind of smoking seems to increase the risk of lung cancer. Smoking cigarettes, cigars and pipes have all been linked to lung cancer. Smoking marijuana may also increase the risk of lung cancer, especially in young people.

Some claim that inhaling e-cigarettes (“vaping”) may be a safer alternative to cigarette smoking, and that it may help tobacco smokers to quit. On the other hand, some believe that e-cigarettes may introduce young people to start smoking tobacco. Much more research is needed to find the answers to these questions. Until those studies are in, most local authorities are restricting sale and use of e-cigarettes the same as tobacco products

Lung cancer can run in families. Researchers are learning that certain genetic mutations—genes that work differently than the “normal” versions of those genes—are linked to lung cancer. People who have those mutations may be more likely to get lung cancer than people who have the “normal” genes. Having one of these genes may be a reason why nonsmokers develop the disease.

Exposure to other harmful substances can also cause lung cancer. Radon is a naturally-occurring odorless, tasteless, invisible radioactive gas. People who are exposed to high levels of radon are much more likely to get lung cancer than people with low levels of exposure. In fact, radon exposure is a leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers. Radon levels can be high not only in underground mines, but also in tightly sealed, poorly ventilated homes.

Exposure to asbestos, a mineral-based substance that was once used in insulation and building construction, can cause lung cancer, especially in smokers. Air pollution has also been linked to the development of lung cancer.