Title: Screening for Lung Cancer

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Plain Language Summary:

What is lung cancer?
Lung cancer is a serious illness. It is caused by an unlimited growth of cells in the lungs. The lungs are the organs which help us to breathe and get air into our body. Over time, this growth can spread outside of the lungs. It can invade other parts of the body and cause death.

What causes lung cancer? Who is at risk for lung cancer?
Anyone can get lung cancer. Most people who get lung cancer are smokers or former smokers. Radon, a poison which is sometimes found in basements, can also cause lung cancer. There are many other harmful chemicals and pollutants in the air which can cause lung cancer.

What are the symptoms of lung cancer?
The following is a list of symptoms which people with lung cancer may develop:

- A cough which does not go away
- Coughing up blood
- Trouble breathing
- Raspy voice
- Swelling in the neck and face
- Chest pain
- Repeated lung infections
- Feeling tired
- Weight loss

These symptoms alone do not mean that a person has lung cancer. Anyone with these symptoms should make an appointment with their doctor.

I do not have any of the above symptoms, but I am a smoker. Should I get a CT scan to check for lung cancer?
Chest x-rays and Chest CTs are tests which allow doctors to take a picture of a person’s lungs. Sometimes these methods can help diagnose cancer. In people without symptoms, these tests are not usually helpful. Doctors do not recommend that people get these tests if they do not have any symptoms.

How will my doctor know if I have lung cancer?
There are many ways to test for lung cancer. If you are having some of the symptoms listed above, your doctor may perform these tests to check for lung cancer. The doctor may begin by taking pictures of your lungs. They can also put a camera down your mouth and look at your lungs from the inside. If the doctor finds any growths, they will take a small sample (called a biopsy) and look for cancer cells under a microscope.
What is the treatment for lung cancer?
There are several different types of lung cancer. Each patient and each type of cancer is treated in a different way. If a patient is found to have lung cancer, they will meet with a cancer specialist to discuss treatment options and care plans.

There are three main options for cancer treatment: surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. The cancer growth may be removed by surgery. Surgery will not remove all cancer cells. Radiation therapy or chemotherapy can be used to kill remaining cancer cells in the lungs.

Additional Resources:

If you would like to know more about lung cancer, please see the web sites listed below:


Key Words:

Lung cancer, cancer screening, cancer diagnosis, cancer treatment, CT screening