

# Lung cancer and COVID-19: impact of the pandemic on screening and diagnosis



Before the pandemic, about every 2½ minutes, someone in the United States was diagnosed with lung cancer.<sup>1</sup> However, screening rates and diagnoses have declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is concerning since the early detection of lung cancer may help lead to better overall survival outcomes.<sup>2,3</sup>

## A Decline in Diagnoses

The number of **all new cancer cases in the United States decreased by 74%** in April 2020, compared to April 2019.<sup>4</sup>

**74%**  
All new cancer cases

**A delayed diagnosis** may lead to detection of the disease at a more advanced stage, which **could result in an increase of cancer deaths in the United States.**<sup>5</sup>

## Why Lung Cancer Screening Matters

Based on findings from the American Lung Association in 2020

- When diagnosed at an early stage, lung cancer has a 5-year survival rate of nearly 60%, but when diagnosed at a late stage, the relative 5-year survival rate decreases to only 6%.<sup>1</sup>
- Once symptoms develop, the cancer has likely reached an advanced stage.<sup>1,6</sup>



**It's important that those at high risk for lung cancer talk with their doctor and determine if they are eligible for a screening.**

## Who Is Eligible for Lung Cancer Screening?



According to recommendations from the US Preventive Services Task Force<sup>7</sup>:

- Adults aged 50-80 years, and
- With at least a 20 pack-year history of smoking and who currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years



**Screening should be done annually and discontinued once a person has not smoked for 15 years or develops a health problem that substantially limits life expectancy or the ability to have lung surgery.**<sup>7</sup>

## Barriers to Lung Cancer Screening



**According to the American Lung Association, 5.7% of Americans at high risk for lung cancer were screened in 2019<sup>1</sup>**

Those considered at high risk for lung cancer may experience **feelings of shame and denial** due to the stigma surrounding common risk factors for the disease, such as smoking.<sup>8</sup>

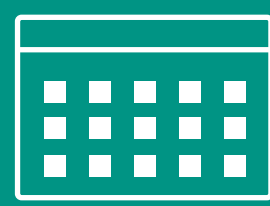
These feelings can lead to a delay in the early detection of lung cancer, which could otherwise improve prognosis and outcomes.<sup>1</sup>



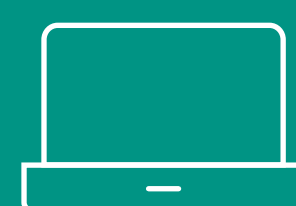
## The Time Is Now



**Speak up** and talk to your doctor if you are at high risk for lung cancer and determine if you are eligible for screening.



**Rebook** any missed appointments or screenings due to COVID-19.



**For additional information, please visit:**  
**Lung Cancer Foundation of America**  
lcfamerica.org

**GO<sub>2</sub> Foundation for Lung Cancer**  
go2foundation.org

**Lung Cancer Research Foundation**  
lungcancerresearchfoundation.org

### References:

- American Lung Association. State of lung cancer 2020. November 17, 2020. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://www.lung.org/research/state-of-lung-cancer/key-findings>
- Patt D, Gordan L, Diaz M, et al. The impact of COVID-19 on cancer care: how the pandemic is delaying cancer diagnosis and treatment for American seniors. *JCO Clin Cancer Informatics*. doi: 10.1200/CCI.20.00134
- Knight SB, Crosbie PA, Balata H, et al. Progress and prospects of early detection in lung cancer. *Open Biol*. 2017;7(9):170070. doi:10.1098/rsob.170070
- London J, Fazio-Eynullayeva E, Palchuk M, et al. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer-related patient encounters. *JCO Clin Cancer Informatics*. 2020;4:657-665.
- Kaufman HW, Chen Z, Niles J, et al. Changes in the number of US patients with newly identified cancer before and during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(8):e2017267. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.17267
- American Cancer Society. Lung cancer early detection, diagnosis, and staging. April 22, 2021. Accessed May 14, 2021. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/CRC/PDF/Public/8705.00.pdf>
- United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). Screening for lung cancer US Preventive Services Task Force recommendation statement. *JAMA*. 2021;325(10):962-970. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.1117
- Borondy Kitts AK. The patient perspective on lung cancer screening and health disparities. *J Am Coll Radiol*. 2019;16(4 Pt B):601-606. doi:10.1016/j.jacr.2018.12.028