Information for Employers:
Lung Cancer Screenings and What Employees Should Know

Actor Portrayal

Lung Cancer Is the Leading Cause of Cancer Death in the United States[1]

16% | In 2022, **16%** of Americans at high risk for lung cancer were screened using low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scans.[2]

The low rate of lung cancer screening may be due to unawareness of the recommendations for screening and who is eligible for a lung cancer screening.[3,4] In 2021, the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) published a recommendation statement on screening in people who do not have signs or symptoms of lung cancer but are at high risk.[5]

It is important that people recognize the eligibility criteria for annual lung cancer screening. Lung cancer screening with LDCT takes less than 10 minutes to complete and does not require any medications or needles.[5,6]

USPSTF Recommendations

The USPSTF recommends an annual screening for lung cancer with LDCT for eligible people who meet all of the following criteria[5,a]:
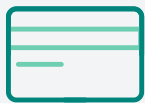
- Adults aged 50 to 80 years
- Smoking history of at least 20 pack-years[b]
- Currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years

It is important to stay consistent with national guidelines as you encourage your eligible employees to consider lung cancer screening.

[a]Screening should be discontinued once a person has not smoked for 15 years or develops a health problem that limits life expectancy or the ability to undergo lung surgery.[3]

[b]A pack-year is the number of packs of cigarettes a person smoked per day multiplied by the number of years they have smoked.[7]

MERCK

Cost-Effectiveness

Using 4 microsimulation models, an **economic evaluation** found that the 2021 USPSTF lung cancer screening guidelines were **cost-effective** compared to the 2013 USPSTF guidelines.[8]

This evaluation simulated 1 million people entering the study at age 45 years, and were followed up until death or age 90 years, whichever occurred first, and assuming full adherence to screening.[8]

A **$100,000 per QALY** willingness-to-pay threshold was used to define cost-effective strategies.[8]

The estimated mean ICER of the 2021 USPSTF guidelines was **$72,564** per QALY gained compared to the 2013 USPSTF screening guidelines.[8]

QALY=quality-adjusted life years; ICER=incremental cost-effectiveness ratio.

Early Detection of Lung Cancer Is Important

Having a lung cancer screening may increase the chances of detecting cancer earlier, before it has spread.[2,5,9]

Risk Factors

Select risk factors that may affect lung cancer risk are[10,a]:

- Smoking
- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Having personal or family history of lung cancer, such as a parent or sibling

aThe above list does not include all risk factors for lung cancer.

Why Lung Cancer Screening Matters

Most lung cancers do not cause any symptoms until they have spread, but some people with earlier-stage lung cancer may have symptoms.[11]

- Screening can lead to detection of lung cancer at an earlier stage.[2] Based on the updated 2021 USPSTF recommendations, up to 14.5 million individuals now are eligible for lung cancer screening.[12]
- Based off SEER data, in the United States from 2015-2021, **23%** of people diagnosed with lung cancer had localized disease, while **73%** of people had either regional or distant disease, while 21% had regional disease and 52% had distant disease.[9]

SEER=Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results.

Myths and Facts About Lung Cancer Screening

MYTHS

- You must have symptoms to qualify for a lung cancer screening.
- Only active smokers need to be screened for lung cancer.
- Lung cancer screening is not covered by insurance.

FACTS

- Symptoms (such as a new cough) are not a requirement to be eligible for a lung cancer screening.[5,13]
- People who currently smoke or have smoked in the last 15 years may qualify for a lung cancer screening.[5]
- Many insurance plans cover lung cancer screenings for those who qualify, and there are options if you don't have insurance. Check with your insurance company to understand if LDCT scans are covered as part of your plan, if you are eligible.[14,15] Other important items to check with your insurance provider is if there are any costs associated with screening and if screening must be done at specific "in-network" facilities. If you don't have insurance, some health centers may offer free lung cancer screenings.[15,16]

Encourage your employees to continue their regular health care visits and, for appropriate employees, screenings for lung cancer

- Encourage routine health care appointments and lung cancer screenings for eligible patients at high risk for lung cancer. Please consider the latest USPSTF lung cancer screening guidelines.[5]
- Emphasize that LDCT screenings take less than 10 minutes to complete and do not require any medications or needles to perform.[6]
- Ensure that your employees understand that lung cancer may be present without any symptoms until the cancer has spread, but some people with earlier-stage lung cancer may have symptoms.[11]
- Educate your employees about select lung cancer risk factors[a]:
  - Smoking[10]
  - Have exposure to secondhand smoke[10]
  - Have a family history of lung cancer, such as a parent or sibling[10]

[a]The above list does not include all risk factors for lung cancer.

Actor Portrayal

Locating a Lung Cancer Screening Center

- If your employees have insurance (such as Medicare), they can call their provider to confirm if an LDCT scan is covered under their plan.[15,16]
- Employees can also ask their doctor for help locating a center for screening, or find a center for screening near them by using a screening center locator and making an appointment.[15,16]

Questions to Ask Their Insurance Company

On the back of their insurance or Medicare/Medicaid card, there is a phone number to call to ask questions about coverage. Before screening, employees should call their insurance company to understand their plan and coverage for screening.[14] Here are a few questions to help get started:

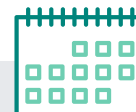|		
Is lung cancer screening covered under my plan?[14]	Am I eligible to have my screening covered? What makes someone eligible for a covered lung cancer screening?[14]	Do I need a referral or pre-authorization from my doctor?[17,18]
Where are the nearest centers that do screening in my network?[17]	Will I be charged for any out-of-pocket expenses?[17]	How frequently are screenings covered?[5,17,19]

Learn more about lung cancer, risk factors, and symptoms by visiting the following websites:

▶ **American Lung Cancer Screening Initiative** at https://www.alcsi.org/

▶ **Lung Cancer Research Foundation** at lungcancerresearchfoundation.org

MERCK

References:

1. Key statistics for lung cancer. American Cancer Society. Last revised January 16, 2025. Accessed February 20, 2025. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/lung-cancer/about/key-statistics.html **2.** Lung cancer key findings: state of lung cancer. American Lung Association. Last updated November 13, 2024. Accessed December 3, 2024. https://www.lung.org/research/state-of-lung-cancer/key-findings **3.** US Preventative 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 **4.** Coughlin JM, Zang Y, Terranella S, et al. Understanding barriers to lung cancer screening in primary care. *J Thorac Dis*. 2020;12(5):2536-2544. **5.** U.S. Preventive Services Task Force issues final recommendation statement on screening for lung cancer. US Preventive Services Task Force Bulletin. Published March 9, 2021. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/sites/default/files/file/supporting_documents/lung-cancer-newsbulletin.pdf **6.** Lung cancer screening. The University of Kansas Health System. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.kansashealthsystem.com/care/treatments/lung-cancer-screening **7.** Pack year. Dictionary of Cancer Terms. National Cancer Institute. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/pack-year **8.** Toumazis I, de Nijs K, Cao P, et al. Cost-effectiveness evaluation of the 2021 US Preventative Services Task Force recommendation for lung cancer screening. *JAMA Oncol*. 2021;7(12):1833-1842. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2021.4942 **9.** Cancer stat facts: lung and bronchus cancer. National Cancer Institute. Accessed April 21, 2025. https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/lungb.html **10.** Lung cancer risk factors. American Cancer Society. Last revised January 29, 2024. Accessed April 2, 2025. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/lung-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html **11.** Signs and symptoms of lung cancer. American Cancer Society. Last revised February 27, 2025. Accessed March 18, 2025. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/lung-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/signs-symptoms.html **12.** Nelson R. USPSTF expands criteria for lung cancer screening. Medscape. March 9, 2021. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/947102 **13.** COVID-19 and lung cancer symptoms - know the difference. Global Lung Cancer Coalition. Last updated January 2021. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.lungcancercoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GLCC-Lung-cancer-and-Covid-19-Factsheet-Final_EN-1.pdf **14.** What to expect from a lung cancer screening: saved by the scan. American Lung Association. Accessed August 8, 2024. https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/lung-cancer/saved-by-the-scan/resources/what-to-expect-from-lung-cancer-screening **15.** How to get screened for cancer if you don't have a doctor. American Cancer Society. Last revised April 21, 2021. Accessed February 27, 2025. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/how-to-get-screened-for-cancer-if-you-dont-have-a-doctor.html **16.** Is lung cancer screening covered under your insurance? American Lung Association. Accessed August 14, 2024. https://www.lung.org/getmedia/36bf8cc4-4878-4289-969e-ee6b8b112e2a/lung-cancer-insurance-chart.pdf **17.** Lung cancer screening insurance checklist. American Lung Association. Accessed August 15, 2024. https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/lung-cancer/saved-by-the-scan/resources/insurance-checklist **18.** Referral. Dictionary of Cancer Terms. National Cancer Institute. Accessed November 26, 2024. https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/referral **19.** Medicare coverage for cancer prevention and early detection. American Cancer Society. Last revised February 15, 2025. Accessed May 20, 2025. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance/government-funded-programs/medicare/medicare-coverage-for-cancer-prevention-and-early-detection.html

MERCK

Educational resource provided by Merck.