



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS



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### What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is a cancer that starts in the lungs. A group of cells that are not normal grow out of control and can also spread to other parts of the body.

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### What is lung cancer screening?

Lung cancer screening looks for signs of cancer while you are feeling well and before you have any symptoms. It uses a low-dose computed tomography (CT) scan to take images of the chest to look for any small lumps, called nodules.

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### Why should I think about getting a low-dose CT scan?

If you have a higher risk for lung cancer, lung cancer screening may find cancer early when treatment works best. Lung cancer screening could save your life.

If you are between 50 and 70 years old, show no signs or symptoms that suggest lung cancer, smoke tobacco cigarettes or have quit within the last 10 years and have a history of long-term cigarette smoking, you should make an appointment with your healthcare provider to see if lung cancer screening is the right choice for you.

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### What will I need to tell the radiology clinic when I book a scan?

Tell them you are a lung cancer screening participant. Please let the radiology clinic know if you need any additional support to help you attend the appointment. For example, if you may need help getting onto the table, or if you would like an interpreter.

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### How could lung cancer screening help me?

**Finding lung cancer early:** There are more treatment options and a better chance of a cure when cancers are found early.

**Peace of mind:** Screening rules out lung cancer but also other lung diseases. A low-dose CT scan can provide assurance of your lung health.

**It gives you an opportunity to discuss your smoking history and get support if you choose to quit.**

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## What might be the potential harms of lung cancer screening?

**False positives:** Of all people screened, around 3 in 100 will have a high-risk or very high-risk nodule found. To see if a high-risk or very high-risk nodule is cancer, more tests like scans or biopsies are needed. Fewer than half of those with a high-risk or very high-risk nodule will turn out to have lung cancer.

**Worry:** It is normal to feel worried when participating in a cancer screening test. While lung cancer screening may find nodules in up to half of the people screened, over 95% will NOT be cancer. Even so, it can be stressful getting the scan, waiting for results or doing further scans or tests. Talk to your healthcare provider so they can provide you with information about support that is available.

**Overdiagnosis and unnecessary treatment:** Some cancers are very slow growing and may not cause problems during your lifetime. This is called 'overdiagnosis' and happens for around 1 in 30 cancers found during lung cancer screening.

**Actionable additional findings:** The scan can also see other parts of the body, in the neck, chest and upper abdomen. Sometimes this can show things either in the lungs (something other than cancer, such as emphysema), or outside of the lungs (such as heart disease). If you have findings not related to lung cancer, the National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) will encourage you to see your healthcare provider. See your healthcare provider to discuss the findings.

**Exposure to radiation:** A low-dose CT scan uses a small amount of radiation. This is lower than one year of exposure to naturally occurring radiation in regular life. This can occur in the ground, soil and water. This is a low level of radiation that is safe and can improve early diagnosis.

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## What if I have symptoms that I think might be lung cancer?

Screening is not suitable for anyone with unexplained persistent symptoms, including those below. These people need different tests.

If you have any of these symptoms, even if your last screening test was very low risk or you are between scans, please talk to your healthcare provider right away.

- **A new or changed cough**
- **Coughing up blood**
- **Being short of breath for no reason**
- **Getting very tired**
- **Unexplained weight loss**
- **Chest or shoulder pain that does not go away**

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### How much will the scan cost?

The low-dose CT scans for lung cancer screening will be covered by Medicare.

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### Why am I not eligible?

The National Lung Cancer Screening Program is a program for people who meet the age and smoking history criteria below and do not have symptoms, aiming to find lung cancer at an early stage.

Research has found that screening benefits people who are between 50 and 70 years old, show no signs or symptoms that suggest lung cancer, smoke tobacco cigarettes or have quit within the last 10 years and have a history of long-term cigarette smoking. For more information, see the [‘Why am I not eligible for lung cancer screening?’ resource](#). You may be eligible in future so keep checking with your healthcare provider.

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### What happens after my scan?

Check your contact details are up to date.

Look out for your results. The NCSR will let you know what to do next. This may be a reminder (by text message or letter) to screen in two years (if you are found to be at very low risk) or return to see your healthcare provider for your results.

Visit your healthcare provider for a new low-dose CT referral to screen again after you get a reminder from the NCSR. You may need more regular scans if there is a finding of low risk or higher from your scan.

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### How often do I need to go for lung cancer screening?

Talk to your healthcare provider to see if you are eligible for the program. If you are eligible, you can have a scan every two years. You will need to get a healthcare provider to refer you for a scan. You may need more regular scans if there is a finding of low risk or higher from your scan.

If you have no significant findings, discuss with your healthcare provider how you can look after your lung health until your next scan in two years time.

Remember, screening works best when you receive regular scans to look for any changes over time. So it is important to return for lung cancer screening when you are due.

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### Where do I go to have screening?

Book in for your scan at a local radiology clinic or mobile screening truck location (in some rural and remote areas). Tell them you are a lung cancer screening participant.

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For more information  
about the National Lung  
Cancer Screening Program:

[www.health.gov.au/nlcsp](http://www.health.gov.au/nlcsp)

Call free Helpline Monday to Friday  
8:00am – 4:30pm AEST (excluding  
public holidays): 1800 654 301 (option 2)

  
**13 7848**

For help to quit smoking:  
[www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)