



Lung cancer screening for people living with mental health challenges

Why this guide exists

People living with mental health challenges can face additional barriers when accessing healthcare. This guide explains lung cancer screening in a way that recognises past distressing experiences of seeking help. Personal experiences of healthcare can be affected by culture, identity, trauma, disability and social circumstances.

Lung cancer screening uses a low-dose CT scan to help find lung cancer early, when treatment works best. Looking after your physical health is good for your mental health. The low-dose CT scan is quick, about 10 seconds with no needles or pain. You are in control and can ask for help at any stage. You have the right to the support you need.

Common worries and what can help

I feel anxious about having the lung cancer scan.

- Bring a support person or comfort item.
- Ask staff to explain each step before it happens.
- Talk to a GP or nurse practitioner about whether medication before your appointment may help, and when to take it. If so, you may need to organise someone to transport you.

I get overwhelmed in unfamiliar places.

- Plan how you will get to the radiology clinic and how long it may take you.
- You can watch a video about the low-dose CT scan process at www.health.gov.au/nlcspvideo
- Ask for a quiet waiting area if available.

I have sensory sensitivities.

- Ask for earplugs or noise reducing headphones (if allowed and available).
- Ask for dimmed lights (if available) or extra time.

I worry about confidentiality.

- Results go to the GP or nurse practitioner who referred you and if you choose to register, the National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR).
- You can ask a GP or nurse practitioner to explain exactly who sees your information.

I'm worried I won't be contactable when the results are available.

- Give a backup or emergency contact to the GP clinic (for example, a support worker or family member).
- Remember to update the GP clinic and the NCSR if you move address or change phone numbers.
- Ask for communication from the NCSR in your preferred way (letter, SMS or email). Communication preferences may need to be updated through the Participant Portal or by contacting the NCSR:

☎ 1800 627 701



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Before your scan

- Get a referral for a low-dose CT scan from a GP or nurse practitioner.
- Make an appointment for your scan with a participating radiology clinic. There may be a wait for an appointment.
- If you require an interpreter, please let the clinic know when booking your appointment.
- Wear comfortable clothes and remove jewellery if requested by the radiographer.
- You can complete a National Lung Cancer Screening Program Safety Plan with a GP or nurse practitioner beforehand to identify supports that will work for you.

During your scan

- A radiographer will guide you.
- Tell the radiographer if you need help getting onto the CT table.
- You lie on your back with your arms above your head (if you can).
- You may use comfort aids like a blanket, fidget tool or practice grounding strategies.
- You hold your breath for a few seconds, the table will move through the machine and make some noise.
- The scan is painless and quick. The whole process can take 5-10 minutes to complete.
- Let your radiographer know if you would like to pause or stop the procedure.

After your scan

- You won't get results on the day, they may take a few weeks.
- A radiologist reviews your scan. Most people have very low risk results.
- Most nodules, if found, are not cancer.
- Results are sent to the NCSR and the GP or nurse practitioner who referred you.
- The NCSR will send you reminders about what to do next. If you are not enrolled in the NCSR, the GP or nurse practitioner who referred you will notify you of your scan results and next steps.
- It may help to talk to someone you trust afterwards.

Mental health support

Lifeline

☎ 13 11 14

BeyondBlue

☎ 1300 224 636

Medicare Mental Health

☎ 1800 595 212

13YARN (First Nations)

☎ 13 92 76

Other support services

Lung Cancer Screening Helpline

☎ 1800 654 301

National Cancer Screening Register

☎ 1800 627 701

If you miss your appointment or can no longer attend

You can call the radiology clinic to reschedule for another time or day.

If you're worried about results

It's normal to feel anxious while waiting for results. You can talk to a:

- GP or nurse practitioner
- support person
- mental health support line.



Scan the QR code for more information about the National Lung Cancer Screening Program or visit www.health.gov.au/nlcsp



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