What to expect at your lung cancer screening scan



Lung cancer screening uses a low-dose CT scan to help find lung cancer early, when treatment works best. This resource explains what to expect when you have a lung cancer screening scan, including how to prepare, what happens during and after the scan and how results are provided.

Before your scan

- Get a referral for a low-dose CT scan from a GP or nurse practitioner.
- Make an appointment with a participating radiology clinic.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Bring your Medicare card and referral.
- Tell the radiology clinic if you need:
  - help getting onto the table and other adjustments for support
  - a support person
  - an interpreter
  - sensory adjustments
  - extra time
  - support if you are feeling anxious.

When you arrive

- Staff will confirm your details at check-in.
- The radiographer may measure your height and weight.
- You may be asked to remove jewellery and may need to wear a gown.
- A radiographer will guide you into the CT room.

During your scan

- You lie on a table with your arms above your head (if you can).
- You hold your breath for a few seconds as the table moves through the scanner.
- No injections are required.
- If lying on the table is uncomfortable, additional supports such as pillows, may be available to help you feel comfortable.
- Let the radiographer know if you would like to pause or stop the procedure.
- The whole process can take 5-10 minutes.

After your scan

- You can go home straight away.
- The radiographer, GP or nurse practitioner can tell you how long results may take. It could be a few weeks.
- A radiologist reviews your scan. Most people have very low risk results. Most nodules if found, are not cancer.
- The National Cancer Screening Register (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. You can then request a new low-dose CT referral form.
- Keep your contact details up to date.

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Understanding your results

What happens next?

If you are enrolled with the NCSR, you will receive a notification (SMS or letter) with recommended next steps. Depending on your results, this may be having another low-dose CT scan in two years or discussing your results with the GP or nurse practitioner. If you are not enrolled, the GP or nurse practitioner who referred you will notify you of your screening results and any recommended next steps.

If a nodule changes over time, further tests may be recommended.

Your results

Your results will fall into one of these categories.

- **Incomplete:** the scan wasn't clear and you will need another scan.
- **Very low risk:** no findings of concern, re-screen in 2 years.
- **Low risk:** one or more nodules were found on your scan. Follow-up scan in 12 months.
- **Low to moderate or moderate risk:** one or more nodules were found on your scan and need closer monitoring. Follow-up scan in 3 or 6 months.
- **High or very high risk:** nodules need further investigation. A GP or nurse practitioner will refer you to a specialist for follow-up.
- **Actionable additional findings unrelated to lung cancer:** the scan can see other parts of the body in addition to the lungs. This includes the neck, chest and upper abdomen. Sometimes this can show findings either in the lungs (something other than cancer, such as emphysema), or outside of the lungs (like heart disease). The GP or nurse practitioner who referred you and the NCSR will notify you with next steps.

What are lung nodules?

Lung nodules are small lumps in the lungs. They are very common and most are not cancer. They often come from past infections or scarring.

If you're feeling worried

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

- GP or nurse practitioner
- support person
- mental health helpline for support.

Mental health support

Lifeline
13 11 14

Beyond Blue
1300 224 636

Medicare Mental Health
1800 595 212

13YARN (First Nations)
13 92 76

For more information

National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR)
1800 627 701

Lung Cancer Screening Helpline
1800 654 301

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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