



Understand Lung Cancer

What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is a malignant tumour that originates in the lungs. While smoking is the primary cause, other significant risk factors can include a family history among immediate relatives (parents, siblings, or children) and prolonged exposure to second-hand smoke. Environmental factors, such as long-term contact to chemical substances (like asbestos, radon), cooking oil fumes, and air pollution, also contribute significantly to the risk. Notably, there is a growing trend of lung cancer cases appearing in non-smokers.

Because risk levels are unique to every individual, high-risk groups should consult a doctor to discuss lung cancer screenings and regular check-ups. Early detection saves lives.



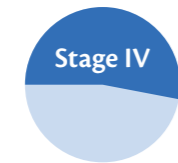
Lung cancer is the most common cancer and it ranks as the 1st leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Hong Kong*



1 in 21 men and 1 in 33 women in Hong Kong are at risk of developing lung cancer**



There were 6,111 new cases of lung cancer in 2023*









Over 50% of lung cancer cases are diagnosed at an advanced stage (Stage IV)*

*Hong Kong Cancer Registry, Hospital Authority 2025 (figures in 2023)
 **Lifetime risk for Hong Kong people before age 75

Lung cancer symptoms

Early-stage lung cancer often has no symptoms and can go unnoticed. By the time symptoms surface, the cancer has already reached an advanced stage. Regular screenings are vital for early detection. The sooner it's found, the better the outlook for successful treatment and recovery.

 Persistent coughing or coughing up blood	 Breathlessness
 Repeated chest infections	 Hoarseness
 Unexplained weight loss	 Fatigue

These symptoms are not exclusive to lung cancer; other conditions can present with similar signs. While experiencing them doesn't necessarily mean you have lung cancer, they should not be ignored.

If symptoms persist for more than three weeks without improvement, or if they continue to worsen, it is advisable to seek medical attention promptly to determine the underlying cause.

Types of lung cancer

Lung cancer is primarily categorized into two main types based on the size of the cancer cells:

Small Cell Lung Cancer (SCLC): The cancer cells are smaller in size. It is mostly caused by smoking. It grows and spreads at a faster rate.

Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC): The cancer cells are larger than those of SCLC. It accounts for about 80% of all lung cancer cases. Common types include:

- **Adenocarcinoma:** Caused by mutations in the mucus-secreting cells of the airway lining. It is more common in non-smokers and accounts for about 60% of all lung cancer cases.
- **Squamous Cell Carcinoma:** Mostly found in the lining of the airways and is usually caused by smoking.
- **Large Cell Carcinoma:** Compared to other types of lung cancer, the cancer cells are large and round.

How can I be screened?

Initial Assessment Tool: Chest X-Ray

Target Audience: Individuals who are already experiencing symptoms

Functions and Limitations: A Chest X-ray can provide an initial look at whether there are abnormal shadows or nodules in the lungs; it is the most common first-line clinical examination. However, its sensitivity is relatively limited for detecting smaller or early-stage lung cancers. If a doctor suspects a risk of lung cancer or requires a more precise evaluation, they will arrange further imaging tests (such as a Low-Dose Computed Tomography).

Early Screening Standard:

Low-Dose Computed Tomography (LDCT)
Target Audience: High-risk individuals who have not yet developed symptoms

Advantages and Process: This method utilizes low-dose radiation technology to capture three-dimensional (3D) images of the lungs, effectively detecting minute early-stage lesions. The process takes only a few minutes; participants simply need to lie still, no anesthesia or contrast agent injections are required. If the scan reveals suspicious lesions, the doctor will arrange further examinations as needed (such as a biopsy or PET-CT scan).

Should I get screened?

Anyone who consider lung cancer screening should be informed of its benefits and limitations. Individuals at higher risk (such as those with a strong family history of lung cancer or a history of smoking) should seek medical advice regarding screening details, including the starting age, method, and frequency. If you experience any suspicious symptoms, please consult a doctor immediately.

To learn more about lung cancer information, please scan the QR code to browse the "Understanding — Lung Cancer" booklet.



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Our thanks to Dr. Leung Kwong Chuen for all of his help in reviewing this leaflet.

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