

about lung cancer

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in the world for both men and women. It can occur in one or both of your lungs, and eventually may affect your breathing.

At Cancer Care of Western New York, we are committed to providing the latest in radiation treatment technology. We believe that having state-of-the-art equipment makes a real difference in the quality of care we provide to all of our patients.

Your Lungs

When you breathe, your lungs fill up with air—including oxygen. Your lungs then transfer this oxygen into your bloodstream, where it travels to cells throughout your body. If you have lung cancer, the tumors in your lungs can interfere with this vital process.

Risk Factors

Approximately 90% of lung cancer cases are related to smoking. However, there are other risk factors, including exposure to secondhand smoke, asbestos, radon, industrial substances and even air pollution.



Signs and Symptoms

Because lung cancer often takes years and years to develop, you may not experience any symptoms until the disease is in the advanced stages. Some of the symptoms include:

- Intense or persistent coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Changes in your voice or breath sounds
- Bronchitis, pneumonia and other lung issues that keep reoccurring
- Coughing up blood, phlegm or mucus, or a change in the amount (or color) of phlegm or mucus
- Pain in your shoulder, back or chest
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Unexplained weight loss, or loss of appetite

Screening and Diagnosis

There are a variety of different tests your physician can use to determine if you have lung cancer. These include everything from a physical examination and chest X-ray, to advanced imaging scans (such as Spiral CT, PET and MRI) to fully evaluate the disease.

If your physician suspects lung cancer you will likely have a biopsy. There are two main ways to biopsy a lung tumor. One method uses a tube down your windpipe and the other method uses CT imaging and a needle through your chest wall. Anesthesia is used during both procedures so there is minimal discomfort.

Treatment Options

Lung cancer may be treated with surgery, radiation or chemotherapy. Typically it is treated with a combination of the three.

In early stages lung cancer is easily accessible by surgical techniques. Depending on the size and location of the tumor a chest surgeon may remove one lobe of the lung (a lobectomy) or an entire lung (a pneumonectomy). Lung function tests prior to the operation help determine if you will be able to tolerate the operation. The surgeon may also remove lymph nodes in your chest during the operation. The tissues removed during the operation are studied under a microscope by a pathologist. Depending on the pathologic findings you may need radiation and/or chemotherapy after surgery.

In advanced stages of lung cancer surgery typically is not an option. These patients are treated with radiation and chemotherapy. Radiation is typically delivered five days per week Monday through Friday for a total of 5–7 weeks. The radiation visits last approximately 15 minutes. The chemotherapy is usually delivered through an IV. There are different chemotherapy dosing schedules. You may be in the chemotherapy clinic a few times each month.

Your physician and the Patient Advocates at Cancer Care of Western New York can answer any additional questions you may have, and help you determine which treatment is right for you.

