

Lung Cancer Awareness



Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death globally, with a survival rate of only 15%. It is the second most common cancer among both men and women in the United States, and the CDC estimates that over 2.2 million people will get Lung Cancer every year, worldwide.

Lung Cancer develops when growth of abnormal cells occur in either the lungs or the bronchi (the air tubes leading to the lungs). While not all lung cancer is caused by smoking, about 85-90 percent is attributed to smoking. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in America after smoking, and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that forms from the decay (breaking down) of radioactive elements, such as uranium, which are found in different amounts in soil and rock throughout the world.

Another major risk factor for contracting lung cancer is exposure to asbestos. Asbestos was banned in the 1980s because of its health dangers. But since more than half of homes in the United States were built before 1980, that means that more than half of U.S. homes likely contain asbestos. Even after it was banned, asbestos was still used in vinyl flooring, roofing and siding, textured paints, and many industrial and insulation materials as a fire retardant.

The most common lung cancer symptoms are:

- A persistent cough that does not go away
- Shortness of breath
- Onset of wheezing
- Recurrent pneumonia or bronchitis
- Coughing up phlegm, mucus, or blood
- Hoarseness
- Chest pain
- Weight loss or loss of appetite

Unfortunately, most symptoms for lung cancer occur when the disease is already present and at its advanced stage.

There are several jobs that may expose people to asbestos. These include:

- Carpentry
- Factory Work
- Demolition
- Insulation
- Shipyard Work
- Firefighters
- Installation of vehicle brake linings

Most carpenters are exposed to dangerous substances at some point in their career, especially when remodeling old buildings. Because of this, it is highly recommended to wear a respirator while working under these conditions.

You can prevent lung cancer by:

- Not smoking. If you smoke, quitting can help drastically lower your chances of getting lung cancer. If you quit smoking before the cancer has developed, your lungs will work to repair themselves.
- Lower your exposure to radon. You can lower your exposure by having your home tested and treated, if needed.
- If you work near cancer-causing chemicals, make sure to protect yourself and lower your exposure to them as much as possible.
- Staying healthy by eating fruits and vegetables can also be helpful in preventing lung cancer.

Due to the nature of the construction industry and the likelihood of exposure to toxic materials, it is very important that we spread awareness on lung cancer.

The NYCDCC Welfare Fund partners with Memorial Sloan Kettering to offer MSK Direct, a program that provides guided access to expert clinical cancer care as well as practical and emotional support to keep you healthy and well. If you or a loved one has been impacted by cancer, please call the NYCDCC-dedicated MSK Direct phone line at **(833) 786-3368** or **(646) 449-1541** or visit www.mskcc.org/direct/nycdcc-welfare-fund.