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## Lung Cancer: The silent killer

November 9th is National Lung Cancer Screening Day. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States, surpassing deaths from colon, breast, and prostate cancer combined.

Lung cancer is a disease in which cells in the lungs grow out of control. Lung cancers usually are grouped into two main types called small cell and non-small cell.

Among all adult's lung cancer is the 3rd most common cancer. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths. Median age of diagnosis is 71 years. 80-90% of lung cancers are associated with cigarettes smoking. The exposure to secondhand smoke can also increase risk for lung cancer. Smoke from other people's cigarettes, cigars, or pipes is called secondhand smoke.

Every year about 14,000 individuals are diagnosed with lung cancer, and nearly 7,200 dies from lung cancer. Males have a higher mortality rate than females.

Screening people who are actively smoking or have a history of smoking can help detect lung cancers early, and therefore increase survival rate. The United States Preventative Services Task Force recommends persons ages 50-80 years with at least a 20 pack-year cigarette smoking history who currently smoke or quit smoking within the past 15 years, be screened for lung cancer with a yearly low dose computed tomography (LDCT).

It may surprise you to know that people who never smoked can also get Lung cancer. I personally lost a friend to lung cancer, and she never smoked in her life.

In the United States, about 10% to 20 % of lung cancers, or 20,000 to 40,000 lung cancers each year, happen in people who never smoked or smoked fewer than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime.

Researchers estimate that secondhand smoke contributes to about 7,300 and radon to about 2,900 of these lung cancers.

Lung cancer can be caused by risk factors other than smoking cigarettes, pipes, or cigars. Examples include exposure to other people's smoke, radon, air pollution, a family history of lung cancer and asbestos.

Radon gas is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks. Outdoors, there is so little radon that is not likely to be dangerous. But if there is radon indoors, it can be more concentrated. Breathing it in may increase a person's risk of lung cancer.

According to the US Environment Protection Agency EPA, radon is the second leading cause among people who don't smoke.

Symptoms of lung cancer include frequent cough, coughing up blood, chest pain, wheezing or shortness of breath.

The US Preventive Services Task Force does not recommend lung cancer screening for people who have never smoked. That's because the possible harm of screening outweighs the possible benefit in this group.

The most important thing you can do to prevent lung cancer is not to start smoking, or if you smoke, to quit. If you know people who smoke, encourage them to get screened.

Get your home tested for radon and reduce the radon level if it's high. Be aware of environmental exposures that increased your risks of getting lung cancer.