

# Lung Cancer: It's Not Just Smoking

## November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month



For Lung Cancer Awareness Month in November, the American Cancer Society is reminding the public — and clinicians — that signs and symptoms of lung cancer should not be ignored based on a lack of a history of smoking. While tobacco use is the most important risk factor for lung cancer, about one in five lung cancers occurs in people who never smoked. If counted as a separate category, lung cancer among never-smokers would be among the ten leading causes of cancer death.

“When patients present with symptoms of lung cancer that have persisted for a few weeks without an obvious alternative explanation, they need to be evaluated for lung cancer regardless of whether they have smoked or not,” said Richard C. Wender, M.D., American Cancer Society chief cancer control officer. “Associating lung cancer with smoking has produced stigma for far too many people. Tens of thousands of people who have never smoked develop lung cancer every year. No one, neither someone who smokes or someone who never has smoked, should have to feel shame at a cancer diagnosis or worse, experience a delay in diagnosis.”

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Early diagnosis and care, including testing to make sure patients get the best available treatment, can improve outcomes in lung cancer. If diagnosis and treatment are delayed because of stigma, bias, or due to the assumption that lung cancer is rare in those who don't smoke, patients could suffer as a result.

“We have made dramatic progress in the treatment of lung cancer. This progress is related to our ability to perform comprehensive biomarker diagnostic testing for many patients and to tailor treatments more precisely. We cannot allow stigma and diagnostic delay prevent people from getting the care they need.”

Most lung cancers do not cause any symptoms until they have spread, but some people with early lung cancer do have symptoms. If you go to your doctor when you first notice symptoms, your cancer might be diagnosed at an earlier stage, when treatment is more likely to be effective. The most common symptoms of lung cancer are:

- A cough that does not go away or gets worse
- Coughing up blood or rust-colored sputum (spit or phlegm)
- Chest pain that is often worse with deep breathing, coughing, or laughing
- Hoarseness
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling tired or weak
- Infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia that do not go away or keep coming back
- New onset of wheezing

“While the vast majority of people with these symptoms do not have cancer, anyone experiencing persistent symptoms should make sure the possibility of cancer is considered and investigated,” said Dr. Wender.

For more information, visit: [www.bit.ly/LungCancerGuide](http://www.bit.ly/LungCancerGuide)

