



## Women and Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in one or both lungs. The abnormal cells do not carry out the functions of normal cells and do not develop into healthy lung tissue. As the abnormal cells grow, they can form tumors that keep the lungs from working correctly.

Lung cancer is the third most common cancer. The most common causes are smoking, exposure to radon and secondhand smoke. One in 16 women will develop lung cancer in her life, and 65 percent of the people who die from secondhand smoke-induced lung cancer are women.

### Facts and statistics

Lung cancer takes the lives of more women each year than breast, ovarian and uterine cancers combined. While the number of men who die from lung cancer has decreased significantly, rates for women have stabilized. In the United States, men's incidence rates began declining more than 20 years ago, while women's rates just recently began to decline slightly.

In 2007, an estimated 93,893 women were diagnosed with lung cancer. In the past, lung cancer has been blamed solely on smoking, but people who do not smoke, especially women, are also at risk for developing lung cancer.

### Lung cancer in women

Women seem to be at a greater risk of getting lung cancer than men.

- The number of women who do not smoke but develop lung cancer (20 percent of cases) is nearly double the number of men who do not smoke and have lung cancer (5 to 10 percent of cases).
- Other research shows that out of women and men who have the same history of smoking and are the same age, women have a higher risk of getting lung cancer.

### Lung cancer recovery

Women have been shown to have better survival over five-year survival rates than men at every stage of lung cancer. Also, women who have never smoked are more responsive to new drugs that target non-small cell lung cancer.

If you have ever smoked or have a family history of lung cancer, consider talking to your health care provider about screening tests that may be available to you. Cancer is most treatable when it is detected early.

### How can I reduce my risk?

- If you smoke, get the help you need to quit.
- Test your home for radon exposure so you can get a device to reduce radon levels if they are too high.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and exercise. These activities can help reduce the risk of all cancers.