



What you need to know about...

Types of Lung Cancer

The type of lung cancer depends on the kind of cells that make up a tumor. Doctors determine the type of lung cancer after a test or procedure is done to obtain a tissue or fluid sample from the tumor. Please also see “How Lung Cancer is Diagnosed” for an explanation of the tests or procedures used to identify types and stage of lung cancer.

There are two main types of lung cancer; non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer.

Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) is the most common type of lung cancer, accounting for about 87% of all lung cancers. There are three kinds of non-small cell lung cancer.

- **Adenocarcinoma** accounts for 40% of all NSCLC. This type of lung cancer is usually found in the outer regions of the lung. There is also a rare form of adenocarcinoma, called **bronchioalveolar carcinoma (BAC)** that is on the rise worldwide. BAC spreads throughout the lung, unlike the more common types that form single tumors. The cause of BAC is not known. Although people who smoke can get BAC, it often occurs in people who have never smoked.

- **Squamous cell carcinoma** accounts for 25-30% of NSCLC. This type is usually found near the bronchus, close to the center of the chest. It is also known as epidermoid carcinoma and is usually associated with tobacco smoke exposure.
- **Large cell carcinoma** accounts for about 10-15% of NSCLC. It grows quickly and may appear in any part of the lung.

Small cell lung cancer (SCLC) tends to grow and spread more rapidly and may cause symptoms sooner than non-small cell cancers. This is a less common type of lung cancer.

After the type of lung cancer is identified and the stage of cancer is determined, the patient and their family can discuss treatment options with their team of health care professionals. Treatment for lung cancer is based on the type and stage of lung cancer. Treatments can include surgery to remove the tumor, chemotherapy (medication that kills or shrinks the tumor), and radiation therapy (x-rays that damage cancer cells).