What should I expect on the day of screening?

Please arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment. When you register, you will be asked to verify your physician and personal information.

You initially will be seen by a member of the Lung Cancer Screening Clinic to discuss the CT screening exam and, if you are a current smoker, receive information on smoking cessation.

The CT exam will be performed by a radiologist. The exam does not require blood work or I.V. placement. The screening takes about 10 seconds, during which you are asked to hold your breath in order to limit motion of the lungs.

After the exam is completed, you will meet with a specialist in the Lung Cancer Screening Clinic to receive the results of the screening that same day, before you leave the clinic. A letter will also be sent to your referring physician indicating the results of the screening and any follow-up care that has been recommended.

The Duke Lung Cancer Screening Clinic

Duke Cancer Center
Betty Tong, MD, MHS, MS, thoracic surgeon
Jared Christensen, MD, radiologist
Cathy Hogan, NP, certified tobacco treatment specialist

Duke Raleigh Cancer Center
Jennifer Garst, MD, medical oncologist
Alan Rosen, MD, radiologist
Brenda Wilcox, patient navigator
Susan Bruce, RN, MSN, smoking cessation information specialist

Locations and Phone Numbers

Duke Cancer Center
20 Duke Medicine Circle
Durham, NC 27710
855-623-8132 (TOLL FREE)
919-613-4318 (LOCAL)

Duke Raleigh Cancer Center
3404 Wake Forest Road
Raleigh, NC 27609
919-954-3877

For more information, visit dukecancerinstitute.org/CTLungScreening or dukeraleighhospital.org/cancer

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Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I get screened for lung cancer?
Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Annual screening with computed tomography (CT) scans can find lung cancers in their earliest stage, when the cancer is easier to treat. Results from the National Lung Screening Trial showed that among people at high risk for developing lung cancer, those screened with low-dose CT scans showed a 20 percent reduction in lung cancer-related mortality compared to those who were screened with standard chest X-rays.

What is a CT lung screening?
CT screening is a noninvasive medical test that helps physicians diagnose and treat medical conditions. Helical or spiral CT scans are the most advanced form of CT scans and offer quick and accurate visualization of internal organs.

CT screening addresses an urgent need for improved lung cancer screening and early diagnosis of disease, when it is most treatable. A CT scan is able to detect small nodules that cannot be detected by a chest X-ray.

Who should get a CT lung screening?
People between the ages of 50–74 with a 20 pack-year* smoking history who are current smokers or who quit fewer than 15 years ago may be eligible for this CT screening. Your doctor or a member of the staff can assist in determining if CT lung screening is appropriate for you.

* Pack year is a measurement of smoking. One pack year equals 365 packs of cigarettes.

What are the risks of CT screening?
CT screening for lung cancer is safe and noninvasive; however, there are some risks associated with the screening.

Radiation Dose: CT screening uses a low dose of radiation in order to produce images of the lungs. Cumulative radiation exposure, even in low doses, can damage cells, which may result in cancer later in life; however, the risk of developing a radiation-induced cancer is extremely low. To minimize the amount of radiation exposure to patients, Duke radiologists use a special low-dose protocol.

False Positives: The National Lung Screening Trial found that approximately 25 percent of patients who have CT screening have a positive screen, meaning that a nodule is found in the lung. The vast majority of these nodules are benign (not cancer), which means that most positive screening studies will be a “false positive.” Additional testing is often necessary to determine which nodules represent lung cancer.

What happens if the screening shows I have lung cancer?
Approximately 4 percent of patients with a positive screening are found to have lung cancer. For such patients, the screening study is the first step in the comprehensive care provided by the Duke Cancer Institute’s team of lung cancer specialists. The Duke Cancer Institute is one of the top lung cancer treatment centers in the world. If you are diagnosed with lung cancer, a personalized treatment plan will be developed by our experts in thoracic surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, radiology, and pulmonology to offer the best course of care.

What is the cost of a CT lung screening?
CT screening for lung cancer is currently not covered by most health care plans. The out-of-pocket cost to individuals receiving the screening is $400, due at time of screening.

The Duke Lung Cancer Screening Clinic
Annual screening with low-dose spiral computed tomography (CT) can find lung cancers in their earliest stage, when the cancer is easier to treat. A large national study involving more than 50,000 participants showed that annual screenings using a low-dose spiral CT can reduce the risk of lung cancer death by 20 percent in current and former heavy smokers, compared to those who were screened using a chest X-ray.

At the Duke Cancer Institute’s Lung Cancer Screening Clinic—with locations in Durham and Raleigh—individuals at high risk for developing lung cancer can participate in a lung cancer screening program that provides access to the most advanced diagnostic screening tool: low-dose spiral CT scans. In addition, smoking cessation evaluation and counseling is provided as well as follow-up treatment, if needed.

A multidisciplinary team of lung cancer specialists in the Duke Cancer Institute is committed to offering the most advanced services to patients—from screening and diagnosis to treatment and beyond—with comprehensive support and education services for patients and survivors.

Ask your physician for a CT lung screening referral.