

Low Dose CT (LDCT) Lung Cancer Screening Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

*Now that LDCT is available at our facility, you may have some questions.
We have prepared this short Q&A to address concerns you may have.*

What is an LDCT?

The screening test is performed with a low-dose spiral (helical) CT. The CT scanner rotates around your body, while you lie still on a table that passes through the center of the scanner. The CT scan provides detailed images of the inside of your body, made by a computer that combines the x-ray images taken from different angles. The screening CT can be performed with a single short breath-hold and takes less than 7-15 seconds.

Who is a candidate for this test?

Patients need to be the following criteria:

- Between the ages of 55-77
- Asymptomatic—No signs or symptoms of lung cancer. No major medical problems that would prevent cancer work-up and treatments if discovered during screening
- Current smoker **or** quit smoking with the last 15 years
- Tobacco smoking history of 30+ pack years

What costs are associated with getting an LDCT for lung cancer screening?

For patients that meet criteria, there is no cost associated with the test. The Affordable Care Act requires that ALL insurers, both government and private, cover approved screening exams at no cost to the patient. Low Dose Lung CT Screening was approved by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force in 2014. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved coverage in February of 2015. If you have specific questions about whether your particular insurance plan covers any of the cost of the lung cancer screening CT, you should personally contact your individual insurance carrier BEFORE having the screening CT performed.

For additional information, contact the nurse coordinator at 301-694-5864.

What must radiologists do to be able to perform lung cancer screening?

- Radiologists must be certified or eligible to be certified with the American Board of Radiology or an equivalent organization
- Have documented training in diagnostic training in diagnostic radiology and radiation safety.
- Have significant recent (within the past 3 years) experience in reading and interpreting CT scans for possible lung cancer
- Participate in continuing medical education in accordance with American College of Radiology Standards
- Furnish lung cancer screening with LDCT in a radiology imaging facility that meets the radiology imaging facility eligibility.

How much radiation exposure?

FMH's Low Dose lung cancer screening uses the most advanced CT technology, which means the radiation used is very low. The radiation dose (less than 3mGy) is less than half the average radiation received by those living in the U.S., for smokers the benefits of low-dose screening is much greater than the potential risks for radiation.

What if my exam is abnormal?

You should not undergo screening unless you are willing to allow for additional testing or treatment of abnormal findings. An abnormal exam may demonstrate something other than lung cancer. In that instance, the findings would be discussed with your primary care physician (PCP) who would make additional referrals. If a small nodule of questionable significance is found, we may recommend follow up scans to monitor the nodule and make sure it is not a lung cancer. If there is a finding suspicious for lung cancer, additional tests and treatments may be recommended. If you have a PCP, we will discuss those recommendations with your physician. We make sure that all abnormal findings are communicated to the patient and their doctor and that there is appropriate follow up.

Low Dose CT(LDCT) Lung Cancer Screening Frequently Asked Questions for Providers

What are the Patient Eligibility criteria for LDCT lung cancer screening?

- Age 55-77 years of age
- No current signs or symptoms of lung cancer
- Tobacco smoking history of at least 30 pack-years
- Current or former smokers who have quit within the last 15 years
- Shared decision making with ordering physician

What must physicians do prior to referring a patient for their first LDCT lung cancer screening exam?

Complete a “shared decision-making” session comprised of the following elements:

- Confirmation that patients meet the high risk definition
- A discussion with the patient regarding the benefits and potential harms of screening, information regarding follow-up to the screening; the risks of over-diagnosis and radiation exposure; and a warning that a false positive diagnosis could occur
- Counseling on the importance of being screened each year and the impact of other possible causes of death with lung cancer
- Counseling on the importance of quitting smoking, or staying quit, including information about smoking cessation programs.

What information is required in the order for LDCT lung cancer screening exam?

The CMS coverage decision requires the following elements:

- Patient’s date of birth
- Patient’s height and weight
- Asymptomatic (no signs or symptoms of lung cancer)
- Actual number of pack years smoked
- Current smoking status; former smokers, number of years since quitting
- National Provider Identifier of ordering provider

Why can't I just order a CT Chest without contrast with a history of smoking?

In order for government and private insurers to reimburse for CT lung cancer screening exam, all elements of the CMS decision (age, asymptomatic, smoking history, screening duration and shared decision making) must be met and documented. Otherwise, you place the patient at risk for unnecessary financial obligations.

All orders must pass medical necessity requirements for both government and private insurers.

What costs are associated with getting a LDCT for lung cancer screening?

The Affordable Care Act requires that ALL insurers, both government and private, cover approved screening exams at no cost to the patient. However, patient insurance plans vary in coverage, so you should encourage the patient to contact their insurance carrier BEFORE having the LDCT screening exam performed.

How can the FMH Lung Clinic help me in managing patients meeting the eligibility requirements for LDCT lung cancer screening?

Patient Navigation/Management Assistance:

- Screening for eligibility
- Initial counseling/decision making session
- Ordering of LDCT
- Follow-up testing as recommended
- Coordination of care with you:
Positive findings resulting in additional testing or consultation

Resource: Nurse Coordinator at 301-694-5864

How do I schedule my patient for a LDCT lung cancer screening exam if I am not using the FMH Lung Clinic?

- Complete the Standardized FMH Lung Cancer Screening Form
- Contact the FMH Scheduling Center at 240-566-3400 to schedule an appointment