Lung Cancer: Risk Factors and Screening

According to the American Cancer Society's (ACS) 2012 cancer statistics, lung cancer has become the most deadly form of cancer - causing as many deaths as the next four leading causes of cancer deaths combined. Although some might be at risk due to family history, most who are diagnosed with lung cancer can attribute it to unhealthy habits such as smoking. According to the ACS, almost 176,000 of the estimated 585,720 cancer deaths in 2014 will be caused by tobacco use.

Knowledge is power, especially in terms of health, so here is some important information about risk factors, symptoms and the screening tests which are available.

Risk Factors
There are several risk factors which can be controlled and avoided so as to decrease your chances of developing lung cancer, including:

- Smoking
- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Exposure to radon gas
- Exposure to asbestos/chemicals
- Radiation therapies (often for other cancers) to the chest
- Diet

The number one way to help prevent the development of lung cancer is to never start or quit smoking, in addition to avoiding second-hand smoke. While most risk factors are things a person can proactively avoid, a family history of lung cancer has shown to give people an increased risk of the disease.

Symptoms
If you have a history of smoking, have held a job in a workplace filled with dangerous chemicals and gases, or have a family history of lung cancer, there are certain symptoms you should be aware of and watching for, including:

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- Wheezing
- Hoarseness in one's voice
- Persistent cough
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Coughing up phlegm or mucus
- Extreme weight loss without cause
- Bone pain/aches

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