The Decision: Should I Screen for Lung Cancer?

This decision aid is to help you think about the pros and cons of lung cancer screening, so you can make the right choice for you.

- Lung cancer can occur without symptoms in the early stages and it can grow quickly.

- The goal of lung cancer screening is to find lung cancer early, so that it can be treated and cured.

- Screening for lung cancer uses a low-dose CT or CAT scan to take pictures of your lungs. It takes about 10 minutes, it is painless, and you keep your clothes on during the process

Am I Eligible for Lung Cancer Screening?

To be eligible you must meet all of the following:

1. You are 55 – 77 years old

2. You smoked at least a pack per day for a total of 30 or more years, or 2 packs per day for a total of 15 years (1 pack = 20 cigarettes)

3. You currently smoke or quit less than 15 years ago

4. You do not have symptoms of lung cancer (coughing up blood, unexplained weight loss - people with these symptoms need different testing)

What is My Risk of Having Lung Cancer?

I am 70 years old, smoked 1 pack per day for 15 years, and quit 30 years ago.

I am 70 years old, smoked 1 pack per day for 30 years, and quit 10 years ago; no symptoms.

I am 70 years old, smoked 1 pack per day for 40 years, and currently smoke; no symptoms.

Patient 1

Patient 2

Patient 3

Low Risk

High Risk

Patient 1 would not likely benefit from screening

Patient 2 should consider a conversation with a doctor about screening

Patient 3 should prioritize a conversation with a doctor about screening

What Are the Pros and Cons of Screening?

Pros

While this can be stressful to think about, finding lung cancer early can **reduce the risk of dying**.

Screening can give you peace of mind

Screening is painless and requires no preparation

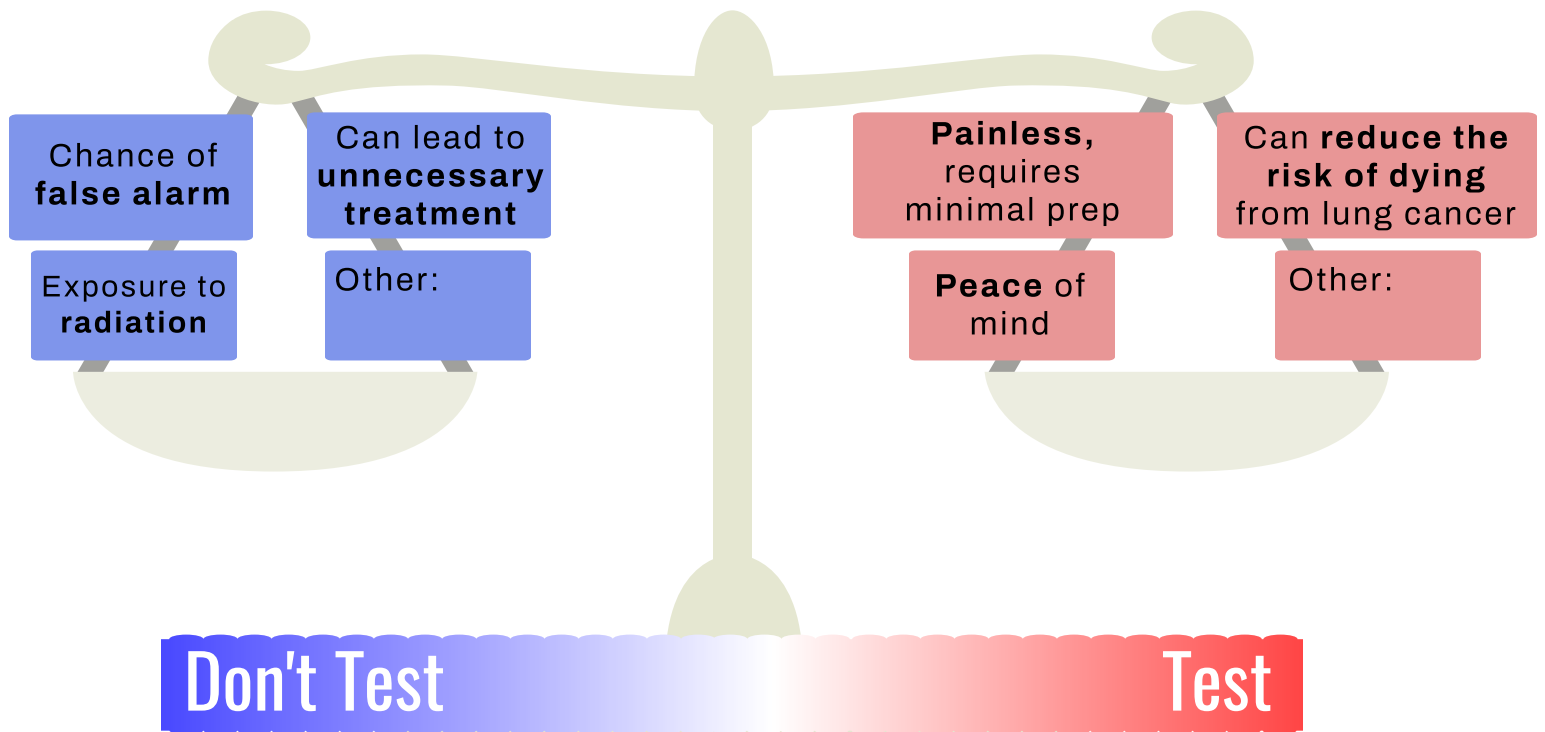A low-dose screen uses more radiation than a chest x-ray, but less than a normal CT scan.

Cons

Screening sometimes finds things that look like cancer, but are not. This is called a **false positive**. Getting a false positive test can cause you to worry unnecessarily. Out of 100 people, about 40 will have a positive CT scan. Of those 40, about 5 actually have lung cancer.

More procedures might be needed to see if a positive result is a false alarm, which can be invasive and have their own harms.

What Is the Right Choice For YOU?

Chance of **false alarm**

Can lead to **unnecessary treatment**

Exposure to **radiation**

Other:

Painless, requires minimal prep

Can **reduce the risk of dying** from lung cancer

Peace of mind

Other:

Don't Test   Test

What else can I do to reduce my lung cancer risk?

Even with lung cancer screening, **quitting smoking or staying quit is still the best thing you can do.**

If you are currently smoking, we are here to help.

Stopping smoking is not easy. There are a lot of options to support you, including medications. Talk to your doctor.

For more help contact the Colorado Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW, or at CoQuitline.org.