



## Talking to a Loved One About Lung Cancer Screening

You can play an important role in a loved one's health by encouraging them to get a lung cancer screening, if they are eligible.

A yearly lung cancer screening in eligible high-risk patients may help detect lung cancer earlier, before it has spread.

However, thinking about the disease can be scary, and it's common for someone to feel anxiety or fear around screening for lung cancer. They may feel fear of the unknown or fear of the screening itself.

When talking with someone who may be afraid of getting a

lung cancer screening, it's important to show them that they aren't alone and you're there to support them every step of the way.

As you take this important step to help your loved one get screened, you may find yourself wearing a lot of hats – teacher, cheerleader, note-taker. But the most important thing you can do is just be there for support.

Use this guide to help you start a conversation with your loved one about lung cancer screening, to prepare them for discussions with their doctor and to support them throughout the screening process.

### Starting the conversation

The first step is sometimes the hardest. You might feel nervous about starting a conversation about lung cancer screening with your loved one, but if you take some time to prepare and know what you're going to say, it may be easier. Use these tips for inspiration:

- ✓ **Understand their risk.** Learn about the factors that increase one's risk for lung cancer and determine if your loved one meets the criteria for a screening. The screening eligibility quiz found on our website is a helpful tool for this step.

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- ✓ **Find a quiet time.** Choose a time and place where you can talk without distractions and interruptions.

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- ✓ **Acknowledge their fears and your own.** Talk about why you're concerned that they might be at risk for lung cancer and note any risk factors that they have. Acknowledge that thinking about lung cancer can be scary, but be sure to emphasize that you're here to support them, and this is something you can take on together.

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- ✓ **Focus on the potential benefits and ease of screening.** Remind them of the following information:
  - Lung cancer screening may detect the lung cancer early, before it has spread to other parts of the body.
  - A yearly lung cancer screening with a low-dose CT scan, for those who are eligible, may help doctors find lung cancer before symptoms occur.
  - The scan usually takes less than 10 minutes, and it doesn't require any medications or needles. It is something those at high-risk for lung cancer should do annually, if eligible.

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- ✓ **Be encouraging.** If they are current or former smokers, assure them that neither you nor anyone else will judge them for their smoking history and that it's never too late to take control of their health by getting screened, if eligible.
  - Reinforce that you are there to support them no matter what.
  - Ease their anxiety and help them understand what to expect by watching these [real life screening stories](#) told by people like them.

## Preparing for the doctor's appointment

If your loved one is open to learning more about lung cancer screening, is to have them talk to their doctor about their risk, discuss whether they are eligible for screening and, if so, make an appointment for a screening. You can support your loved one in having this important conversation with their doctor by taking the following steps:

- **Put it on the calendar.** Help your loved one schedule an appointment with their doctor. If they need help scheduling, consider making the call yourself.
- **Prepare your questions.** Sit down with your loved one and write down the questions you both want to ask the doctor about screening and how to schedule a scan. Some questions you may want to ask are in our [Talking to Your Doctor Tip Sheet](#).
- **Line up transportation.** Make a plan for how you and your loved one will get to the doctor's appointment.
- **Pack pen and paper.** Bring your list of questions, and a pen and paper so that you can take notes. The doctor will likely share a lot of information with you, and it can be helpful to refer back to your notes after the appointment. You can also use the note taking section at the bottom of this guide.
- **Listen carefully during the appointment and ask questions, as needed.** Go to the appointment with your loved one so that you can help ask questions and take notes. Let your loved one take the lead as much as they are comfortable, but don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions. You want to be sure you both understand the recommended next steps.



## Getting screened

You're almost there – your loved one's decision to get screened is a big one. Tell them that you're proud of them for taking this step. Now help them follow through.

- **Find a screening center near you.**
- **Make the appointment.** Schedule their screening and ask what they need to do to prepare. Check with your loved one's insurance about costs associated with the screening.
- **Be on time.** The screening center may even ask your loved one to arrive early to fill out any paperwork before their scan.
- **Understand the results and any next steps.** After the scan, your loved one's doctor will contact them with the results. Ask if you can join this conversation so you can both learn what the results mean and if there is any follow up testing needed.
- **Be vigilant about repeat testing.** Screening is recommended yearly for those who are eligible. Set a reminder for your loved one to schedule another scan during the next calendar year as part of their annual health maintenance, as long as they remain eligible.



There may be a lot of emotions for you and your loved one as you move through the screening process. Confronting the possibility of a lung cancer diagnosis can cause feelings of fear and anxiety, and it can be difficult to manage these emotions while you're awaiting doctor appointments and screening results. Here are some tips to help you support your loved one and manage emotions you both may be feeling.



If your loved one wants to talk about their feelings around screening, listen with compassion. Reassure them that you'll walk beside them no matter the outcome.



It's common to feel some anxiety or fear around screening. Tell them it's normal to feel anxious, especially when waiting for the test results. Encourage them to talk to their doctor about their fears and see what they may recommend to calm any nerves.



Put some activities on the calendar. Spending time with friends, getting some exercise, playing board games or making a meal together can help your loved one focus on something else and take their mind off the screening.



Taking deep breaths can help reduce anxiety and stress. Find time to take a few minutes with your loved one every day to do some simple breathing exercises.

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