

LUNG CANCER AT A GLANCE

Lung cancer is the leading cause of death in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, there were 174,000 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed in 2004 with more than 160,000 deaths reported. Statistics show that 90% of lung cancers come from tobacco use. Other leading causes of lung cancer besides smoking are exposure to radon, asbestos and being around second hand smoke.

The biggest culprit for developing lung cancer is smoking. Tobacco makes up more than 3,500 chemicals. Of which, 40 are carcinogens, along with 30 toxic metals, including nickel and cadmium. Polonium 210 which is a radioactive compound has also been found to be in tobacco products. All of which are hazardous to your health.

There are various treatment options for cancer. The form of treatment depends on the size, location, and type of cancer involved. Small cell cancer that spreads aggressively may respond to chemotherapy or radiation and support care might be used. Whereas, non-small cell cancer is a more common cancer and may be removed surgically. Seventy five percent of lung cancers are of

this type. Three categories of non small cell include: squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma and large cell carcinoma. Usually removing the cancer is the treatment of choice. This can be done by wedge resection, lobectomy, or a pneumonectomy.

The American Cancer Society at the present time does not recommend general screening tests for lung cancer. When diagnosing lung cancer, an x ray can show abnormal masses and a CT may show very small lesions. But for a definitive diagnosis, a tissue biopsy must be obtained. There are different methods to obtain biopsies. A flexible tube can be passed into the small airways: this is called a bronchoscopy. Another method could be a mediastinoscopy, which is where a small incision is made in the base of the neck to take lymph nodes to sample for cancer in the chest. Other methods of tissue retrieval are: transthoracic needle biopsy, sputum cytology, thoracentesis or a video thoracoscopy.

After diagnosing cancer, it is then staged. This defines where and to what extent of the cancer has spread and is denoted usually by roman numerals. Staging starts with 0-IV, with IV being most extensive spread of cancer.

Prevention should be practiced all the time by not smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke. You also can test your home for radon emission. Practice good healthy eating habits by eating from all the food groups. This provides your body with a lot of antioxidants to aid in cancer prevention.

Attention all smokers, in preparation for the upcoming Great American Smokeout, November 17, 2005, prepare to quit smoking now. Think of how you might embrace this task and be successful. On November 17, 2005, there will be a pilot project in Lawrenceburg for all smokers to go 'Cold Turkey.' This opportunity is open to all Dearborn County residents. The project will involve making a pledge not to smoke and at the same time your pledge will make you eligible for a multiple prize drawing. I will give more information about this project in future articles. So stay tuned.

As always, if you have any questions or comments, eMail me at gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov