



## Jackson County Department of Public Health

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November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month, which includes any cancer that forms in the tissues of the bronchus or lung. Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in the world and is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the US, taking about 152,000 American lives each year regardless of gender or ethnicity. According to the North Carolina Division of Public Health, lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men (2,791) and women (2,322) in North Carolina in 2019, and our state's rates are higher than the national rates.

There are certain risk factors that increase your chances for developing lung cancer. Using tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars, pipes, e-cigarettes, vape pens and hookah, exposure to environmental hazards such as secondhand smoke, radon, asbestos, coal dust, and other chemicals or substances, radiation therapy to the chest, and personal and/or family history of lung cancer are all risk factors. Approximately 80% of all lung cancers are caused by cigarette smoking. Further, nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their risk of developing lung cancer by 20-30%, causing more than 7,300 cancer deaths among US nonsmokers each year.

Symptoms of lung cancer include coughing that gets worse or does not go away, chest pain, shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing up blood, feeling very tired all the time and/or unexplained weight loss. Lung cancer screening is recommended if you are someone who is between 50 and 80 years old, if you are currently smoking or quit within the last 15 years, or if you have a 20 pack-year history (for example, smoke one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years). Speak with your doctor about screenings. Treatment is usually most successful when cancer is detected early. Lung cancer treatment options include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and targeted cancer therapies.

You can reduce your lung cancer risk by making healthy lifestyle choices and changes. Quitting tobacco and vaping takes practice, but coaching and medications can triple your chances of staying quit. Call 1-800-Quit-Now or visit [www.quitlinenc.com](http://www.quitlinenc.com) to get started. In addition to quitting tobacco, avoid exposure to secondhand smoke, test your home for radon, be aware of workplace environmental hazards, know your family history, and get a lung cancer screening if you are eligible. For more information about lung cancer, talk to your doctor and visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/lung/>.

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