

Patient information factsheet

Lung cancer screening scan

After your lung health check, we may invite you in for a lung screening scan. We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of the questions you may have about the scan or your results.

What is a lung screening scan?

In a lung cancer screening scan, we use a low-dose CT (computerised tomography) scan to check for the early signs of lung cancer, before you have any symptoms. This is a special scan that uses a very low dose of radiation and a computer to take a detailed picture of your lungs.

What happens during a lung cancer screening scan?

During the scan, you will usually lie flat on your back on a bed that moves slowly into the CT scanner. The scanner is shaped like a ring and it rotates around a small section of your body as you pass through it.

Specially-trained staff (called radiographers) control the scanner from behind a screen in the CT room. You will be able to see and speak to them during the scan. When a scan is taken, you will need to lie still and follow simple breathing instructions for 10 seconds. This makes sure the pictures are not blurred. The scan is painless and you will be able to eat, drink or drive as normal after your scan.

When will I get my results?

You will get your results within four weeks. These will be sent to you in a letter. Your GP will also receive a letter with your results.

What are the possible results?

There are four possible results:

No abnormalities found

This means that no signs of lung cancer or other abnormalities were seen on the scan. We will write to you with the results and ask you to come back for another scan in two years. However, it is still possible that lung cancer could develop or that the scan may have missed it. If you notice anything that is not normal for you before your next scan, tell your doctor.

Further scan needed

This usually means there are some shadows (or nodules) on the scan. It is probably something harmless but it could be more serious. We will write and ask you to come for another scan sooner than normal, in around three months, just to check. Please read the 'Nodules' section of this factsheet for more information.

Patient information factsheet

Abnormal result

This means there is something abnormal on the scan and you need further tests. We will call you and write to the hospital so you can be seen by a doctor. It could mean you have lung cancer. Around half of people with an abnormal result will have lung cancer.

Incidental finding

This means there is no sign of lung cancer but there are signs of other problems on the scan that may need treatment or medical advice. We will write to you and your GP. You may need to see your GP or another doctor.

Nodules

Your letter might say that 'a nodule' has been found and a further scan is needed.

What is a nodule?

A nodule is an area of roundish shadowing usually 3cm (approximately 1 inch) or smaller in the lung. It does not usually cause any symptoms but can be seen on a CT scan and sometimes on a chest x-ray.

Why do nodules occur?

Nodules are very common. Approximately 25% of older people who smoke or who are ex-smokers have nodules. People who have never smoked may also have nodules.

Most nodules are benign (non-cancerous) and could be due to scarring from previous lung infections. They are very common in people who have had TB (Tuberculosis) and can occur in people who have had other conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

For a small number of people, the nodule could be a very early lung cancer or occasionally a secondary cancer that has spread from elsewhere in the body.

Symptoms of lung nodules

Most lung nodules do not cause any symptoms and are often found 'incidentally or accidentally' when a chest x-ray or other scan is performed for another reason. If symptoms are present they may include a cough, wheezing, shortness of breath, recurrent respiratory infections.

What happens if I have nodules?

It is not always possible to know what the cause of a nodule is from the CT scan alone. Because nodules are small, a biopsy (a test performed to take a piece of the nodule for analysis) may be very difficult. We will keep an eye on the nodule by repeating the CT scan after a certain amount of time to see whether it grows or changes.

Benign (non-cancerous) nodules grow very slowly, or may not grow at all. On the other hand, malignant (cancerous) nodules will eventually grow, although this can happen slowly. We can check if the nodule is changing by repeating a chest x-ray or CT scan over a period of months or years. If the nodule grows or changes in any way then your specialist doctors may arrange for you to have further tests.

The targeted lung health team will provide you with a follow-up CT scan depending on the size, location and number of nodules found on your scan. This scan is usually performed three months after your first scan but in some cases this may be six to 12 months after your first scan. It may be necessary to have a number of CT scans over a number of years. This

Patient information factsheet

will depend on your scan results.

In some cases we may arrange for you to have another type of scan or investigation. We will let you know if this is needed.

Symptoms to look out for

Tell your GP if you develop any of the following symptoms between your scans:

- pain in your chest
- shortness of breath
- repeated chest infections
- coughing up blood

Your GP may refer you to a hospital specialist for further investigations.

Contact us

If you have any questions or worries about your CT scan results, please call the targeted lung health team (TLHC) clinical team on: **023 8120 8883**

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan/

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**