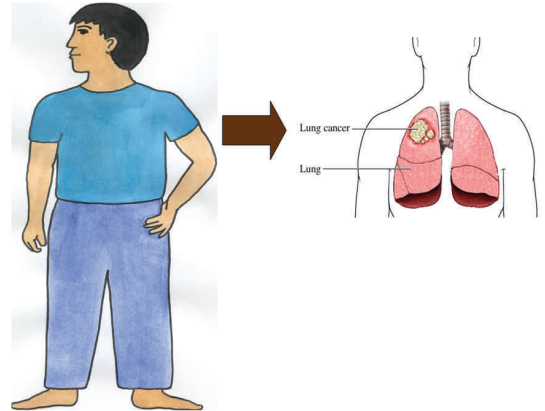




## What is lung cancer?

The lungs are two sponge-like organs found in the chest that help you breathe.

Lung cancer begins when cells in the lungs grow uncontrollably and form tumors or pre-cancerous changes.



## Why is lung cancer a concern for American Indian people?

There are regional differences in smoking rates for American Indian people. American Indian men and women in the Southwest have the lowest smoking rates. However, lung cancer is usually fatal when detected late.

## What causes lung cancer?

Tobacco smoking from smoking commercial cigarettes causes 9 out of 10 cases of lung cancer. The chemicals in commercial cigarettes change the normal cells in the lung to cancer cells.

## What are other the risk factors for lung cancer?

- **Smoking cigars and pipe smoking:** it is the same as smoking cigarettes.
- **Second hand smoke:** people who don't smoke but breathe the smoke of family members have a 20% chance of developing lung cancer.
- **Radon exposure:** Radon is a radioactive gas made by the natural breakdown of uranium. Radon can't be seen, tasted or smelled. It can be concentrated indoors.
- **Asbestos exposure:** Asbestos was used in buildings to prevent fires. Those who work in asbestos mines or remove asbestos in home are at higher risk of specific lung cancer called mesothelioma.
- **Other cancer causing agents in the workplace:** exposure to uranium as a miner and inhaling chemicals or minerals such as arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, silicon, vinyl chloride, and nickel while working in the electronics industry.

## What can you do to prevent lung cancer?

While no smoking commercial cigarettes prevents most lung cancers, it does not prevent all lung cancers. One can reduce their exposure to tobacco smoking, radon and work related cancer causing agents.

## What are the signs/symptoms of lung cancer?

Symptoms of lung cancer may include:

- No symptoms: the cancer may be discovered in a routine chest x-ray.
- Difficulty breathing and shortness of breath
- A cough that does not go away or worsens
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain
- Persistent respiratory infections
- Unexplained weight loss and/or fatigue.

If you have these symptoms, it is very important to see your health care provider.

## How can lung cancer be detected?

Doctors use a wide range of tests to diagnose lung cancer. The following are some of those tests:

- **History and physical exam:** the doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms and past history of exposure to tobacco or environmental agents.
- **Chest X-Ray:** an x-ray of the chest to check for any tumors.
- **Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scans:** CAT scans are x-ray procedures that combine multiple images with the aid of a computer to generate views of the body.
- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** The MRI technique uses magnets, radio waves and computer to produce images of the body.
- **Sputum Cytology:** Sputum (spit) is examined under a microscope to check for tumor cells.

The information in the Gathering Basket education materials is not intended as medical advice, please consult your health care provider regarding treatment decisions.



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