

Patient FAQs

Targeted Lung Health Checks are a relatively new initiative so some patients can be a little confused or anxious about attending an appointment. They often seek reassurance from their GP practice. To assist with this, we have put together the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions.

I'm under 55 / over 74. Why can't I have a lung health check?

Currently, lung health checks are for people aged 55-74 who are current or former smokers. Lung health checks are proven to be beneficial in medical research in this age group. Below or above this age, we do not have enough evidence that we can achieve definite benefit. The main concern is that the risks from treatment and other medical conditions begin to outweigh the benefits of screening from 75 years and over. However, anyone can get lung cancer so if you have any concerns or are experiencing symptoms, contact your GP immediately.

Why are lung health checks only available to people who have smoked?

Currently, lung health checks are for people aged 55-74 who are current or former smokers. This is because they are at a higher risk of lung disease or lung cancer than people who have never smoked. This is based on medical research. Research to show benefits in other settings, such as those who have never smoked, have smoked low amounts, or who have experienced passive smoking, is not yet available. However, anyone can get lung cancer so if you have any concerns or are experiencing symptoms, contact your GP immediately.

I've quit smoking so why do I need to go?

Well done for successfully quitting smoking. In doing so, you have reduced your risk of getting lung cancer. However, you still have a higher risk of lung cancer than someone who has never smoked, so you should still go for the check.

There's a history of lung cancer in my family so can I be tested?

Currently, lung health checks are for people aged 55-74 who have ever smoked. This is because they are at a higher risk of getting lung cancer. There is currently no proof from medical research that an inherited risk of cancer alone can reliably inform who is more at risk of having lung cancer. Smoking history is proven to be the best measure for identifying who should have a lung check because former/current smokers are more

likely to develop lung cancer. However, we do take family history into account in the lung health check risk assessment. If you are worried about hereditary cancer, please contact your GP directly.

I'm scared about what they might find at the appointment

It's understandable that you might be a little nervous about having a lung health check, but it is really important you go. You can request that someone goes with you to the appointment, such as a family member or friend. Chances are everything will be ok but if it is lung cancer, catching it early can make all the difference. People diagnosed with lung cancer at the earliest stage are nearly 20 times more likely to survive for five years than those whose cancer is caught late.

What happens at the check and CT scan?

Your initial appointment may be in person, by phone, or online. A health professional will ask about your health and lifestyle to find out more about your risk of developing lung cancer. If the check finds you meet a certain level of risk of developing lung cancer, you will be invited for a low-dose CT scan.. This is very common and is not necessarily a cause for concern. Your CT scan will be done in either a local hospital or in a mobile CT unit within the community.

A CT scan takes a detailed picture of your lungs and checks for any signs of lung cancer or lung disease. During the scan, the bed moves in and out of the scanner. Your head and legs stay outside of the scanner, and you do not go into an enclosed space. It only takes a few minutes and does not hurt. You can also bring a friend or relative with you.

How do I get my results?

You will receive a letter or a call with your results within 4 weeks of the CT scan. This will tell you what happens next. If the scan shows anything concerning, you may be referred for further lung scans or treatment. If the scan shows nothing of concern, you will be invited back for another scan every two years until you are 75.

What are lung nodules?

Lung nodules are small clumps of cells in the lungs. They are very common. Most lung nodules are scar tissue from past lung infections. Around 15 out of every 100 people screened have nodules on their lungs. Most nodules are harmless and caused by something else like scarring from a previous chest infection. Around 1 in 100 people who go for a CT scan are diagnosed with lung cancer.