

Risk Factors for Lung Cancer

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[En Español \(Spanish Version\)](#)

A risk factor is something that increases your likelihood of getting a disease or condition.

It is possible to develop [lung cancer](#) with or without the risk factors listed below. However, the more risk factors you have, the greater your likelihood of developing lung cancer. If you have a number of risk factors, ask your doctor what you can do to reduce your risk.

Risk factors for lung cancer include:

Smoking

Substances in cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products have been shown to cause lung cancer. How long you have smoked, the amount and type of products, and whether you have inhaled affect your level of risk.

Secondhand Smoke

Some studies indicate breathing smoke in the air caused by someone else smoking increases your risk of lung cancer.

Medical Conditions

Lung diseases, such as [tuberculosis](#) (TB), cause scarring of the lungs. Lung tissues scarred by TB seem to be more prone to lung cancer. A person who has had lung cancer is at greater risk than other people to develop another tumor.

Age

The risk of lung cancer begins to increase at age 40; it is uncommon in people younger than 40.

Other

Exposure to radon, [asbestos](#), coal dust, or air pollution can damage your lungs and increase your risk of lung cancer. Air pollutants, such as by-products from the combustion of diesel and other fossil fuels, are linked to lung cancer, although the relationship is not yet clear.

As stated previously, some cancers are the result of scarring in the lung from other conditions, such as TB. If you have such a condition, you may wish to discuss how best to monitor for the possible development of cancer in a scar.

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