

Atrium Health Navicent Recognizes Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers recommendations for lung cancer screenings

MACON, Ga., Nov. 21, 2022 – In observance of Lung Cancer Awareness Month, Atrium Health Navicent encourages men and women to know their risks for lung cancer and to get annual screenings if they are at a high risk for developing the disease.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death, making up almost 25 percent of all cancer deaths. Each year, more people die of lung cancer than of colon, breast and prostate cancers combined.

Overall, the chance that a man will develop lung cancer in his lifetime is about 1 in 15. For a woman, the risk is about 1 in 17. The American Cancer Society estimates that approximately 236,740 new cases of lung cancer will be diagnosed in 2022, and an estimated 130,180 people will die of the disease this year.

The impact is no different in central Georgia where there were 43.4 annual average deaths from lung cancer per 100,000 people from 2016-2018, which is higher than the state average of 39.0. In 2022, the American Cancer Society estimates there will be 7,700 new cases of lung cancer in Georgia, leading to 4,180 deaths.

Most lung cancer cases are diagnosed at later stages when the cancer has spread to other organs. At that point, treatment options are less likely to be effective and survival is lower. But, with early detection and intervention, lung cancer can be survivable.

In Georgia, 21.1 percent of cases are caught at an early stage. Low-dose CT scans, such as those offered at Atrium Health Navicent, can be helpful tools for individuals at a high risk for developing lung cancer.

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued recommendations for lung cancer screenings. Annual low-dose CT screenings are recommended for adults who have a 20 pack-year or more smoking history, **and** who smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years **and** who are between 50 and 80 years old. A “pack-year” is smoking an average of one pack of cigarettes per day for one year. For example, a person could have a 20 pack-year history by smoking one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years.

A study on early detection of lung cancer found that the low-dose cancer screening test can reduce mortality by 20 percent for those at high risk.

"Unfortunately, previous generations did not have a good lung cancer screening test. Lung cancers were being diagnosed at advanced stages when patients were more symptomatic, and this limited their treatment options. Now, however, we have a screening test which has changed the trajectory for many patients," said Dr. Katie McQueen Amaker, an Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center medical oncologist. "It's incredibly important to know your risk and, if you're at high risk, to undergo recommended lung cancer screenings so the disease can be detected early when it's easier to treat. If you've been diagnosed with lung cancer, make an appointment at the Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center where physicians and services are available to help during your treatment and survivorship journey."

Atrium Health Navicent offers CT lung screens at several locations, including:

- Atrium Health Navicent Imaging & Laboratory (1650 Hardeman Avenue, Macon)
- Atrium Health Navicent Baldwin (821 N. Cobb Street, Milledgeville)
- Atrium Health Navicent Peach (1960 Highway 247 Connector, Byron)

- Atrium Health Navicent Imaging Monroe (120 N. Lee Street, Suite B, Forsyth)

Smoking is the leading risk factor for lung cancer and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

Other risk factors for lung cancer include:

- Second-hand smoke. The CDC reports that breathing in the smoke of others causes more than 7,300 deaths from lung cancer each year. Second-hand smoke is also a risk factor for COPD.
- Exposure to radon. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks. You can't see, taste, or smell it. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in this country, and is the leading cause among people who don't smoke.
- Exposure to asbestos. People who work with asbestos (such as in mills, textile plants and places where insulation is used) are several times more likely to die of lung cancer.
- Previous radiation therapy to lungs. People who have had radiation therapy to the chest for other cancers are at higher risk for lung cancer, particularly if they smoke.
- Air pollution. Air pollution (especially near heavily trafficked roads) appears to raise the risk of lung cancer slightly. Air pollution is also a risk factor for COPD.
- History of lung cancer. If you have had lung cancer, you have a higher risk of developing another lung cancer. Brothers, sisters, and children of people who have had lung cancer may have a slightly higher risk of lung cancer themselves, especially if a relative was diagnosed at a younger age.

The biggest way to reduce your risk of lung cancer and COPD is to quit smoking. Quitting, even for a day, is an important step toward a healthier life. Other ways to reduce risk include limited exposure to cancer-causing agents such as radon and asbestos, and eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.

For information about resources for how to quit call 478-633-2614. To find a doctor, visit <http://www.NavicentHealth.org> and click "Find A Doctor."

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of healthcare in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

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