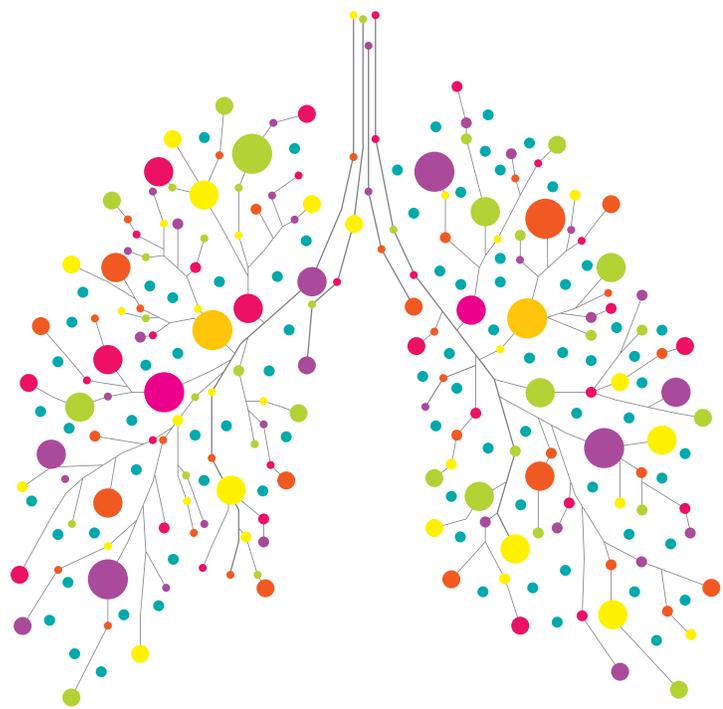


LUNG HEALTH



People are often concerned about the health of their heart, brain, liver and bones but spend little time thinking about the health of their lungs unless they have an infection or disease. However, lungs are essential for life and therefore it is important to care for them and keep them healthy. While the body does have a defense mechanism to keep lungs healthy there are actions that you can take to help and to reduce the risk of lung damage.

These are:

STOP SMOKING AND DON'T START

Cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. If you don't smoke, then don't start, and if you do smoke, it is never too late to quit. Smokers who quit have a substantially lower risk for lung cancer than current smokers, even within 5 years of stopping smoking¹. However, formerly heavy smokers have more than a three-fold greater risk for lung cancer than those who never smoked, even several decades after quitting, hence the importance of lung cancer screening².

VAPING - There have been nearly 1,500 cases associated with the use of e-cigarette, or vaping, products which has resulted in 33 deaths. The cause is unknown but seems to be associated with the use of products containing THC. Do not start using e-cigarettes and if you are already using them as a way of stopping smoking, do not go back to cigarettes and stop as soon as you can.

Employer Actions:

- Provide tobacco & smoke free workplaces
- Provide access to smoking cessation support and nicotine replacement
- Provide lung cancer screening for those at risk

Employer Action:

- Consider extending worksite tobacco ban to e-cigarettes.

AVOID EXPOSURE TO INDOOR POLLUTANTS THAT CAN DAMAGE YOUR LUNGS

Indoor air quality both at home and at work can contribute to, or cause, lung distress. Pollutants include dust, irritants, chemicals and secondhand smoke as well as mold and radon. Here are a few suggestions to help improve indoor air quality at home and at work:

- Keep the home or workplace clean – vacuum regularly and try and avoid chemical-laden cleaners.
- Dust and mold both like humidity, so if it's an issue, use a de-humidifier.
- Radon is a radioactive gas occurring naturally in the ground and can cause lung cancer. It is colorless and odorless, and the only way to know it is there is to test for it. Basements of homes and workplaces are at the highest risk.
- Avoid exposures to asbestos, mostly found in older insulation and building materials.
- Always use respiratory protection if required at work.
- Ensure heating and cooling systems are well maintained and filters changed regularly.
- Purify the air with indoor plants.

1 <https://academic.oup.com/jnci/article-abstract/110/11/1201/4996947>

2 <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/UpdateSummaryFinal/lung-cancer-screening>

MINIMIZE EXPOSURE TO OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution can come from factories and vehicles, as well as natural sources such as fires and dust. Unhealthy air is hazardous and can even shorten lives. Actions people can take:

- Know your local pollution levels – [AirNow](#), a government site, provides data by zip code.
- Avoid exercising outdoors when pollution levels are elevated.

PREVENT INFECTION

While most common colds and other respiratory infections are self-limiting, they can sometimes become very serious. Things you can do to protect yourself:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water and use hand-sanitizers.
- Avoid crowds during the cold and flu season.
- Get vaccinated against influenza and ask your healthcare provider if the pneumococcal vaccine is needed (generally older adults or those with pre-existing conditions.)
- Ensure good oral hygiene and see your dentist every 6 months.
- Visit your PCP at least annually.
- If you get sick, keep it to yourself by keeping your distance from others, including staying away from work until you're feeling better.

Employer Actions:

- Encourage and facilitate influenza vaccinations
- Provide dental benefits
- Provide equitable PTO

EXERCISE AND EAT WELL

When you are physically active, your heart and lungs work harder to supply the additional oxygen your muscles demand. Regular exercise makes the lungs more efficient at getting oxygen into the bloodstream and transporting it to the working muscles. There is some evidence that antioxidant-rich foods and cruciferous vegetables such as bok choy, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower can reduce the risk of lung cancer. Listen to your mother—eat your veggies!

