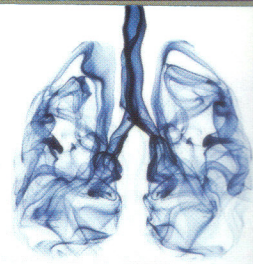


# The Smoke Screen



The threat of lung cancer is very real for tobacco smokers and nonsmokers alike. Fortunately, lung cancer screening is more efficient, accurate and accessible for those deemed at high risk for the potentially deadly disease.

Tobacco use is on a steady decline, with the cigarette smoking rate among adults reaching an all-time low at 17.8 percent in 2013, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The key to this decline is relentless prevention efforts aimed at children who attend public schools. The bad news? Smoking continues to be the leading cause of lung cancer, which is the leading cause of cancer deaths. In 2015 lung cancer is expected to be responsible for 27 percent of all cancer deaths in the U.S.

The best way for smokers to lower their risk of lung cancer is to stop smoking. Changing lifestyle habits, such as exercising more and maintaining a healthy diet, is also recommended, to improve

overall health. Today, lung cancer screenings with low-dose computed tomography (CT) are covered by Medicare for patients who meet these criteria:

- age 55 to 77
- have no signs of lung cancer
- current smoker or have quit within the past 15 years
- smoked the equivalent of 30 pack years (one pack a day for 30 years, two packs a days for 15 years)
- have a physician's referral

Smokers can take advantage of these screenings by contacting their primary care physicians. If you are not covered by Medicare, most insurance providers will still pay for a lung cancer screening if you meet these criteria. Call your provider to see if you qualify.

## NO SMOKE, NO PROBLEM? NOT ALWAYS

According to the American Cancer Society, as many as 24,000 nonsmokers die of lung cancer every year. However, second-hand smoke inhalation is only responsible for about 14 percent of annual lung cancer-related deaths in nonsmokers. The American Lung Association reports that radon and occupational hazards, such as contact with asbestos or working in close proximity to coal, diesel exhaust and industrial chemicals, can also increase the likelihood of lung cancer.

Those who live with a smoker or work in a high-risk occupation should discuss their lung cancer risk with their primary care physician.

If your physician decides you should be screened for lung cancer, visit [christussetx.org](http://christussetx.org) or call (866) 683-3627 to find a CHRISTUS Southeast Texas Health System physician in your area.

## Seeing a Loved One Through SAD

As the weather begins to cool, you notice a change in your friend's mood and energy level that could be due to seasonal affective disorder (SAD). How can you provide support?

Nine out of 10 cases of SAD occur during winter, with symptoms often beginning in fall. Signs of this type of depression include anxiety, irritability, fatigue, loss of interest in hobbies, avoidance of other people, changes in appetite and weight gain.

Use these tips to show a friend in need that you're there:

**+ Accept her feelings at face value.** Take your friend's symptoms seriously rather than try to minimize or explain them. You may not be able to understand how she feels, but you can be empathetic and compassionate.

**+ Gently encourage him to seek help.** Suggest speaking with a medical professional, and offer to accompany him to the appointment if he wishes.

**+ Let her know you're with her all the way.**

Simply saying, "I'm here for you, no matter what" or "You can always call on me" can be wonderfully reassuring, even if your friend claims she doesn't need help.

Remain positive through everything. Your friend may view you as a source of hope that he or she can overcome SAD.



If you experience symptoms of SAD, don't keep them to yourself. Visit [christussetx.org](http://christussetx.org) or call (844) 274-DOCS (3627) to find a primary care physician or mental health professional who can recommend treatment.