Lung Cancer and Smoking

What causes lung cancer?
Smoking is the primary cause of lung cancer. About 87 percent of the deaths caused by lung cancer are related to smoking. Smoking is also a major cause of cancer of the mouth, larynx (voice box), and esophagus (swallowing tube). Smoking also increases the risk of cancer of the bladder, kidney, pancreas and uterine cervix.

Besides smoking, what other factors can cause lung cancer?
Exposure to asbestos increases the risk of lung cancer. Asbestos is a type of insulation used in some buildings. The development of some lung cancers may be related to breathing asbestos dust. Exposure to a radioactive gas (radon) may also increase the risk of lung cancer. Radon is the gas which forms from the breakdown of radium in the soil. This gas is sometimes found in homes built on land with high levels of radium.

How much greater is the risk for lung cancer in a person who smokes compared to someone who does not smoke?
The risk of lung cancer is 25 times greater for the person who smokes. The best approach is to decrease your risk for lung cancer — do not smoke or stop if you do.

Does smoking low tar and nicotine cigarettes decrease the risk of lung cancer?
No. Often the person who smokes this type of cigarette smokes more to satisfy his or her craving for nicotine. Smoke from any cigarette causes inflammation of the lining of the bronchioles (tubes leading to the lungs), which is what increases the risk of lung cancer.

If I stop smoking today, will my risk for lung cancer decrease?
The risk of lung cancer decreases as soon as a person stops smoking. After not smoking for 15 years, a former smoker has only a slightly higher risk of developing lung cancer than someone who has never smoked.
Is it ever too late to stop smoking to lower the risk of lung cancer?
No, even people with lung cancer can benefit from quitting smoking. Those who quit are less likely to develop a second lung cancer than those who continue to smoke.

Does living with someone who smokes increase the risk of lung cancer?
Yes. Although a person who lives with a smoker breathes in less smoke than the smoker (because the smoke is mixed with air), the non-smoker is at an increased risk of lung cancer. Three percent of the deaths caused by lung cancer are due to “involuntary smoking.”

Where does lung cancer rank among other cancers in terms of causes of cancer deaths in men and women?
Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among both men and women. Approximately 157,000 people die of lung cancer every year.

What are the chances of being cured of lung cancer?
Only ten out of 100 people diagnosed with lung cancer are still alive five years after the lung cancer was diagnosed. Most forms of lung cancer start without any warning signs, so it is difficult to detect lung cancer in the early stages when it is more likely to be cured.

For more information call: