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CANCER OF THE LUNG



AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY, INC

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foreword

Cancer is one of the great killers of mankind in the United States. It causes more than 325,000 deaths a year—more than any other ailment, except heart disease. Yet many of these deaths from cancer could be prevented by early treatment. Of the major diseases which cause death, cancer is one of the most curable, provided treatment begins before the disease has spread.

The importance of early treatment makes the problem of cancer an intensely personal matter for you. It is up to you to know the warning signals so that you may get to a doctor promptly if a signal appears. If you do not act quickly, you could be throwing away years of your life. If you do act in good time, you may extend your life span by many years.

CANCER OF THE LUNG

Cancer is often a curable disease—1,500,000 living Americans who have had cancer and have been cured of their disease are vital testimony to this fact. Cancer of the lung, like other cancers, can be cured, but it has one of the highest death rates of any cancer. And the death rate is mounting along with the number of cases. Each year almost 59,000 Americans die of lung cancer—more than from any other type of cancer. Currently, 95 percent die of the disease within five years. Lung cancer is the only form of cancer showing a rapid increase—almost an epidemic.

Why the increase in cases of lung cancer? Why the high death rate? To answer these questions, we must look at the nature of the disease. Public awareness of all aspects of cancer is vital.

WHAT LUNG CANCER IS

Lung cancer, like other forms of cancer, is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells. These cells grow into and around the cells that make up normal tissue. Therefore, they rob nearby normal cells of nourishment and crowd them out.

Most cancers are thought to start with just a single cancer cell. Lung cancer may be different; there is ground to believe that lung cancers start in many different cells in various parts of the lung.

Once the cancer cells take hold, they multiply. As they multiply, they form clusters which increase in size until they form a tumor or a lump of tissue enough to be seen on an X ray.

A unique feature of cancer, as opposed to a benign growth like a wart or a cyst, is that cancer spreads to other parts of the body. It does this by breaking off from the original group and moving into the bloodstream, or into the lymph system, and coming to rest in other parts of the body. When a cancer reaches this stage, with tumors growing in many parts of the body, it is very difficult, often impossible, to cure.

This process of colonizing is known as metastasis. The lung is constantly expanding and contracting and has a very rich blood and lymph supply. Therefore, lung cancers tend to spread more quickly and widely through metastasis than other cancers. This is one reason why they are so deadly. Lung cancers may spread to the brain, to the liver, the bone marrow—to almost any part of the body. Also, lung cancers are adjacent to vital arteries, and the heart, and may spread directly into these structures before the cancer is detected.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of lung cancer vary depending on where the cancer occurs. If it starts in the air passages, known as the bronchi, it will cause partial obstruction and irrita-

tion and the symptom probably will be a cough. The sputum may contain blood. However, lung cancer can also start in any other part of the lung. These cancers are not suspected until they show up on X rays.

In its very earliest stages, lung cancer is a silent disease. It gives no warning of its presence and may not be found even by examination. This is another reason it is so deadly. Coughing may occur in some cases, and it may not in others. All coughs which "hang on," however, should be checked.

DETECTING LUNG CANCER

If every adult had a chest X ray with his regular physical examination, and if the heavy cigarette smoker had such an X ray every six months, more lung cancers would be found early and treatment would be more successful.

If all coughs which lasted for more than two or three weeks were actively investigated, even more lung cancers would be found in the early, curable stages. This goes for "cigarette coughs," coughs resulting from colds, pneumonia, etc.

Lingering so-called "virus pneumonia" and any unexplained persistent lung infection in adults, especially cigarette smokers, should be checked by the doctor as soon as possible.

Examinations of the cells in sputum may show if lung cancer is present. Such microscopic examinations, similar to the Pap test

for cancer of the uterus, are not as widely used in detecting lung cancer as they could be.

The bronchoscope, an instrument for examining the windpipe and the interior of the lungs, is used for a visual examination and for taking samples of suspicious tissue. This examination is made under general anesthesia, and is used for diagnosis if cancer of the lung or any other lung abnormalities are suspected by the physician.

TREATMENT

The primary form of treatment for lung cancer is surgery. This has been perfected over the years, and it is now quite common for a surgeon to remove an entire lobe of the lung for lung cancer. Under favorable conditions many patients who have complete surgical excision of the cancer can be cured. The cure rate in lung cancer is low because the operation is too often performed too late and because the disease is so difficult to detect in its early stages.

PREVENTING LUNG CANCER

The fact that lung cancer is so deadly, and increasing so rapidly, need not lead to a fatalistic attitude.

At least 75 per cent of all lung cancers in this country can be *prevented*.

This is because their causes are known.

A few lung cancers are known to be caused by inhaling certain mining dusts or

chemicals. These industrial causes of lung cancer can be controlled, and these lung cancers prevented.

A more widespread cause of lung cancer has been established during the past fifteen years. This is cigarette smoking, which is responsible for about three out of four lung cancers.

The cigarette smoker runs the risk of getting lung cancer in proportion to the number of cigarettes smoked, the amount of time he has smoked, his age when he started, and how deeply he inhales.

(The risk is even more lethal when the other deaths caused by smoking cigarettes are added in. These include premature deaths from heart disease, emphysema, and other conditions for a total of at least 125,000 deaths each year. The National Center for Health Statistics also reports 12,000,000 additional chronic conditions among cigarette smokers that would probably not exist if no one smoked cigarettes. These cause more days of hospitalization, time lost from work, etc., among smokers than among nonsmokers.)

Studies of several million people in a dozen countries have shown that while almost all lung cancer patients are heavy smokers, people who don't smoke rarely get lung cancer, particularly the most common form—squamous cell cancer.

Microscopic examinations of the lungs of men who have smoked cigarettes, and

who have died of diseases other than lung cancer, have showed cell changes, considered precancerous, in direct proportion to the number of cigarettes they have smoked.

Since lung cancer is hard to detect early enough to be cured, the best safeguard against it is *never to smoke cigarettes*.

THE TIME TO STOP IS NOW

The second best protection against lung cancer for those who do smoke is to *stop smoking cigarettes*. No matter how long you have smoked, if you stop, and if no irreversible disease has started (cancer is only one of the irreversible lung conditions caused by smoking), the lungs gradually *repair themselves*. Studies have shown that an ex-smoker who has not smoked cigarettes for ten years has about the same health prognosis and life expectancy as one who has never smoked.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST CANCER

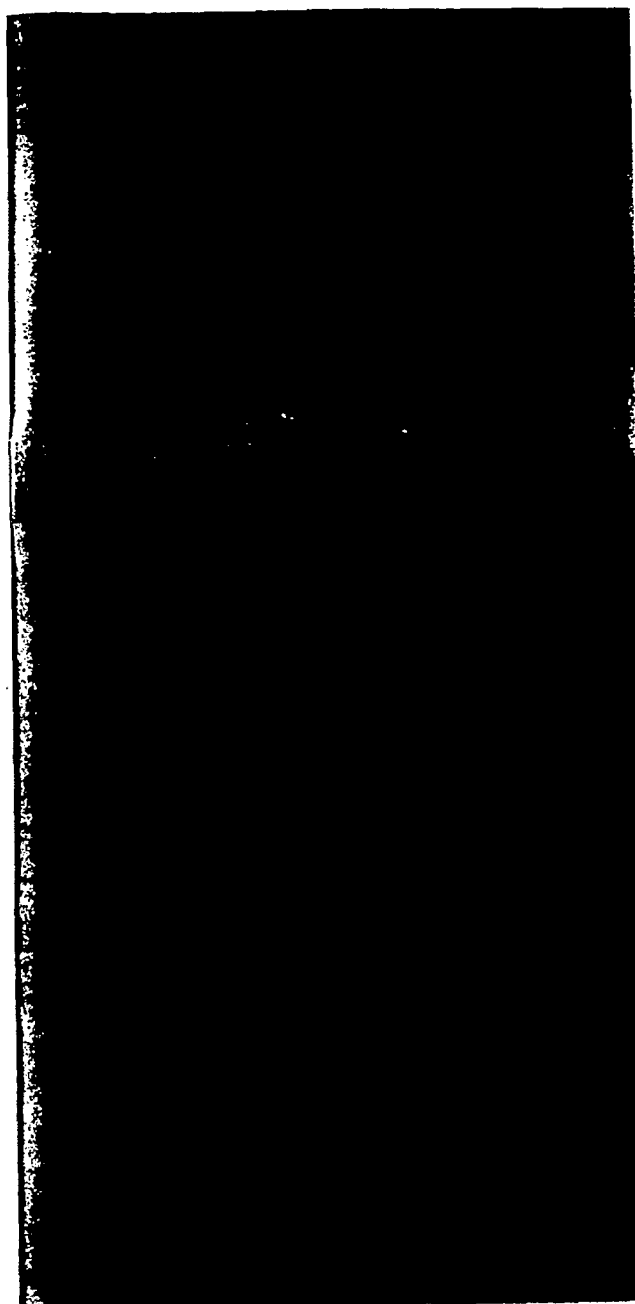
Your best protection against cancer is a periodic health checkup. This examination should include a chest X ray and a "procto" (proctosigmoidoscopic examination) for all adults and a pelvic examination for all women. For protection between examinations, learn the *Seven Warning Signals* and if any signal lasts more than two weeks, go to your doctor. Only he can tell whether it means cancer.

CANCER'S SEVEN WARNING SIGNALS

1. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
2. A lump or thickening in the breast or elsewhere.
3. A sore that does not heal.
4. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
5. Hoarseness or cough.
6. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
7. Change in a size or color of a wart or mole.

If your signal lasts longer than two weeks, it is important to go to your doctor.

For further information consult your doctor, your city or county health department, or your local or state office of the American Cancer Society.



THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

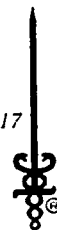
The American Cancer Society, a national voluntary agency, fights cancer through research, education and service to the cancer patient, and is financed by your gifts.

This pamphlet is a part of its effort to save lives through teaching men and women what they can do to defend themselves against death from cancer.

The American Cancer Society is yours and needs you in the fight against cancer.

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