

# ONTARIO LUNG SCREENING PROGRAM


Key Information for People Who Qualify for  
Screening in Waterloo Wellington


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# Lung Cancer Screening in Waterloo Wellington

The Ontario Lung Screening Program (OLSP) helps to detect and diagnose lung cancer in people at high risk. You have been referred to the OLSP program in Waterloo Wellington to assess your risk. To find out more about OLSP services contact your local OLSP location:

 519 749-4300 extension 3783

 [wwregionalcancerprogram@wrhn.ca](mailto:wwregionalcancerprogram@wrhn.ca)

## Overview of OLSP

<b>Step 1: Referral</b>	A doctor or nurse practitioner will refer you to the OLSP program for assessment. You can also self-refer.
<b>Step 2: Initial Screening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You will speak with an OLSP staff member.</li><li>• They will ask you screening questions (see questions in next section).</li><li>• If you meet the referral criteria, then you will be booked for a follow-up phone call with an OLSP nurse.</li></ul>
<b>Step 3: Risk Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You will have a Risk Assessment phone call with a Registered Nurse from the OLSP.</li><li>• You will get a risk score that helps to plan your next steps.</li></ul>
<b>Step 4: Low-Dose CT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Based on your score, you may qualify for lung cancer screening.</li><li>• You will be booked for a low-dose CT scan.</li></ul>
<b>Step 5: Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your OLSP nurse will call you to talk about next steps.</li><li>• Based on your risk score and CT results, you may be booked for follow-up CT scans.</li></ul>

# Why Screen for Lung Cancer

Regular screening is important because it can find lung cancer early, when treatment has a better chance of working.

You may be at high risk if you:

- Are 55 to 80 years old.
- Have used tobacco products every day for at least 20 years (it does not need to be 20 years in a row).

## How to Qualify for the OLSP

By getting this handout, you are someone who **may** qualify for lung cancer screening. Based on your age and smoking history, you are moving on to the next step. You will be booked for a risk assessment phone call with an OLSP nurse.

### Risk Assessment Phone Call

During your phone call with the OLSP nurse, they will ask you more questions about your health history. The nurse will calculate your **risk score**. Your risk score tells you your chance of getting lung cancer in the next 6 years. Your risk score will determine if you qualify for lung screening and help to plan next steps in your care.

#### Risk Scores

For example, a risk score of 10 means that there is a 1 in 10 (10%) chance that you may get lung cancer in the next 6 years.

If your risk is 2 out of 100 (2%) or higher over the next 6 years, you can take part in the Ontario Lung Screening Program.

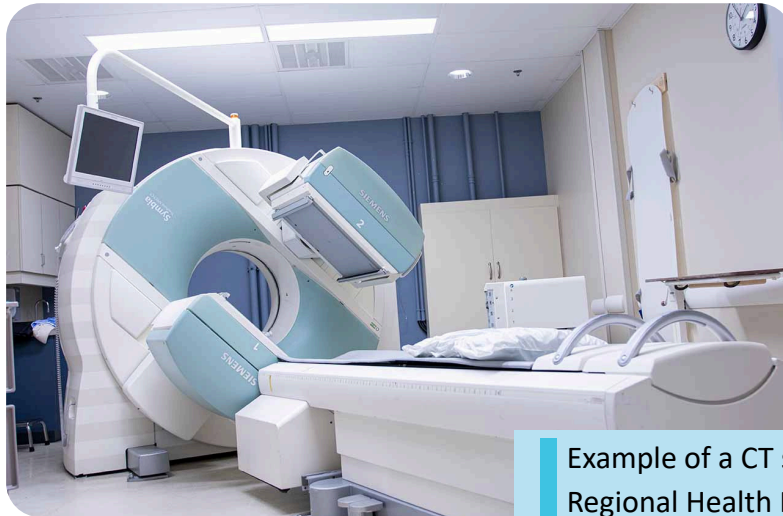
### What if I Don't Qualify for Lung Cancer Screening?

Your risk of developing lung cancer can change over time. If an OLSP site tells you that you do not qualify for screening, you can check again in 3 years. You should check again sooner if you have:

- Started smoking again (if you had quit)
- Been told you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- A new family history of lung cancer

# What is Lung Cancer Screening?

Cancer screening is testing done on people who are at risk of getting cancer, but who have no symptoms and generally feel fine. This testing may help find cancer early, before symptoms start. The lung cancer screening test is a type of computed tomography (CT) scan that uses a small amount of radiation. This test is called a **low-dose CT scan**.



Example of a CT scanner at Waterloo Regional Health Network.

During a low-dose CT scan, you lie on an open table that passes through a large donut-shaped machine, called a scanner. The scanner uses a small amount of radiation to take detailed pictures of your lungs. The test only takes a few minutes and is not painful. There are no medications or needles given during the test.

## CT Scans

Learn more about CT Scans, how they are done, and side effects through the Canadian Cancer Society.



[cancer.ca/en/treatments/tests-and-procedures/computed-tomography-ct-scan](https://cancer.ca/en/treatments/tests-and-procedures/computed-tomography-ct-scan)

The low-dose CT scan looks for lung nodules, which are spots on someone's lungs, but cannot tell whether they are actually cancer. Having a lung nodule does not necessarily mean that you have lung cancer, but it does mean that more testing is needed.

Not all of the lung cancers found by low-dose CT will be caught early enough. Screening may not make your health better or help you live longer if it finds:

- A cancer that has already spread to other parts of the body.
- A type of cancer that is harder to treat.

# Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening

While screening can help find lung cancer early, screening tests are not perfect and can have potential harms. For people at high risk of getting lung cancer, the potential benefits of finding cancer early are likely greater than the potential harms of screening. When making a decision to screen think about what matters most to you.

## Potential Benefits

- Getting screened regularly with a low-dose CT scan can find lung cancer earlier which may mean that:
  - The chance of dying from lung cancer is lower
  - Treatment may have a better chance of working
  - Fewer treatments may be required and the treatments may be less invasive (easier to handle)
- Screening can be part of taking an active role in protecting your health and can be reassuring for some people.
- Regular screening can help to catch other cancers in nearby tissues

## Potential Harms

- Low-dose CT scans may result in a false positive. Some low-dose CT scans may show a nodule that is not cancer (like an infection or scar tissue). Or it may show a nodule that needs more testing.
- Lung cancer screening may find cancer that grows very slowly and would never cause problems. Sometimes this may lead to you getting treatments or procedures that are not needed.
- Low-dose CT scans use a small amount of radiation. The amount of radiation is low, but there is a small chance that having **many** low-dose CT scans **over time** could cause cancer.
- It is possible that you may have lung cancer that is not found during your low-dose CT scans. You may also have lung cancer that may grow in the time between scans.

## How much radiation am I getting?

The amount of radiation from a low-dose CT scan is:

- More than a chest X-ray
- Less than a regular chest CT scan
- About the same as 1 year of natural background radiation (radiation from the sky and the ground, and through breathing, eating and drinking).



**Once you are booked for your low-dose CT, you are part of the Ontario Lung Screening Program. Read on for information about your results.**

## Your Results

After your low-dose CT scan:

- A Radiologist (doctor who reads tests and scans to see what is happening inside your body) will look at your low-dose CT scan. Based on your results you will get a score that will help to plan your next steps.
- The OLSP nurse will call you with your result (scan score) within 2 weeks of your scan date. You can see what the scan score means and the next steps in the table on **page 6**.
- Your low-dose CT scan also takes pictures of body parts near your lungs, such as your:
  - Heart
  - Bones
  - Kidneys
  - Liver
  - Thyroid

If your low-dose CT scan shows something unusual in these other body parts, your results will be sent to the doctor or nurse practitioner that referred you. They will decide whether you need more tests based on these results.

The chart below shows you next steps you may have after your low-dose CT scan:

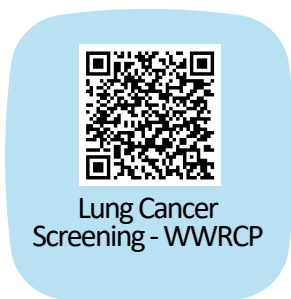
<b>Another Low-Dose CT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your OLSP nurse will call you with your CT scan results. They will let you know if you need another low-dose CT scan. You will get a phone call with your next low-dose CT appointment.</li><li>• You can view your test results and appointments on <b>My Connected Care</b>. Learn more at <a href="http://www.wrhn.ca/digital-health">www.wrhn.ca/digital-health</a>.</li><li>• <b>You will continue to be screened about once every year.</b> It is important to come back for your next scheduled scan. Screening works best if you get checked regularly.</li></ul>
<b>Being sent for more testing to find out if you have lung cancer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your OLSP nurse will refer you to the Lung Diagnostic Assessment Program (LDAP) to talk about your next steps.</li><li>• Being sent for more tests does not necessarily mean you have lung cancer.</li><li>• If you do have lung cancer, the LDAP team will talk to you about your treatment options and help you decide what is best for you.</li></ul>


Scan Score	What It Means	Next Steps
0	Your scan showed a possible infection or inflammation that needs follow-up.	Your next scan will be within the next 1 to 3 months.
1	Your scan did not show any nodules that need follow-up.	Your next scan will be in about 12 months.
2	Your scan showed 1 or more nodules with a very low chance of being or becoming cancer.	Your next scan will be in about 12 months.
3	Your scan showed 1 or more nodules with a low chance of being or becoming cancer.	Your next scan will be in about 6 months to check whether any nodules have changed.
4A	Your scan showed 1 or more nodules that might have a chance of being or becoming cancer.	Your next scan will be in about 3 months to check whether any nodules have changed.
4B	Your scan showed 1 or more nodules that need more testing.	You will be sent for more testing.
4X	Your scan showed 1 or more nodules that need more testing.	You will be sent for more testing.

# Resources

Visit the **J. Wesley Graham Patient & Family Resource Centre** to get a printed copy of resources. Volunteers can help you find and access credible cancer information.

You can also scan the QR Code or click the blue links below to learn more online.



**Lung Cancer Screening:** [wrhn.ca/wwrcp/prevention-screening/lung-cancer-screening](http://wrhn.ca/wwrcp/prevention-screening/lung-cancer-screening)   
**Screening for Lung Cancer:** [cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/lung/screening](http://cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/lung/screening)  
**Patient & Family Resource Centre:** [wrhn.ca/wwrcp/support/patient-family-resource-centre](http://wrhn.ca/wwrcp/support/patient-family-resource-centre)  
**Lung Cancer Canada:** [lungcancerCanada.ca](http://lungcancerCanada.ca)  
**My Connected Care:** [wrhn.ca/digital-health](http://wrhn.ca/digital-health)

This material was adapted from “Love Your Lungs” (2025) created by Ontario Health-Cancer Care Ontario. Use this resource for your information only. It does not replace medical advice from your doctor or other healthcare professionals.

