

Survivorship Care at the Brown Cancer Center

We are all survivors from day one and beyond

November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Kentucky continues to have one of the highest rates of incidence and deaths from lung cancer. Lung cancer usually is not detected until signs and symptoms are present, in which the patient is at a more advanced stage. Prevention and early detection is the key to fight this disease. Smoking, or exposure to tobacco products in any form, is the major risk factor for lung cancer. Nonsmokers who breathe the smoke of others (secondhand smoke) are also at increased risk for lung cancer.

Finding cancer in early stages leads to better prognosis and outcome. That makes screening very important. Screening for lung cancer includes a low dose CT scan which can identify small nodules or other abnormalities in the lungs. Currently, lung cancer screening is recommended (and covered by most insurance plans and Medicare) for individuals ages 55-80 who have smoked within the last 15 years and have more than a 30 pack-year history of smoking. So what's a pack year? A pack year is calculated by multiplying the packs of cigarettes smoked per day times the number of years smoked. For example:

Smoking 1 pack per day x 5 years = 5 pack years

Smoking ½ pack per day x 30 years = 15 pack years

Lung cancer does not discriminate and affects nonsmokers and smokers. The best thing that can be done is living a healthy lifestyle, obtaining regular checkups and screening, if you qualify. A lung cancer screening can only be ordered by a physician or nurse practitioner. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if you are at risk. Screening CT scans do not guarantee that you will not develop lung cancer in the future. Follow up after the scan is just as important.

- Dana Lee, RN, BSN, OCN & Smita Ranjan, APRN



Thursday, November 16 is the Great American Smokeout

Smoking and the use of other tobacco products is responsible for numerous diseases such as heart and lung disease. It is also the causes the development of many cancers. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death! There are over 600 ingredients in a cigarette and when burned, a cigarette creates 7,000 chemicals: 69 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer! Other types of products, e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco are thought to be less dangerous, but can still have a negative impact on one's health and those around them. **There is no safe level of tobacco use!**

Even with this knowledge, it is difficult to quit using tobacco products because it is considered a true physical and psychological addiction. There are many resources available in the community to assist with nicotine replacement and emotional support. Quitting tobacco use is not a single event and will take time. It is never too late to quit and take advantage of the health benefits of not smoking.

To get started, do your homework and research. Develop a plan on when, why, and how you will face the challenges and relapses. Talk to family and friends for support and seek out community or one-on-one support. Talk to your physician and pharmacist about what types of nicotine replacements are available.

Louisville area health departments also offer freedom from smoking courses. Visit LouisvilleKy.gov for more information. You can also call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for help.

- Dana Lee, RN, BSN, OCN

Unsung Healthcare Heroes

November is National Caregivers Month. Caregivers have been described as the “unsung heroes” of our healthcare system: they are untrained, unpaid and sacrifice so much of their own time to help their loved ones. The role of a caregiver may include providing emotional support, transportation, preparing meals, completing household chores and overseeing finances.

Being a caregiver can be difficult. Often times, caregivers report as much anxiety as the cancer patient does. They report more difficulty with feeling alone, maintaining a strong front and often times they miss more work and report more major impacts on the ability to do their job.

It is important for caregivers to get the help and support they need. Recommendations include keeping a journal, maintaining friendships, preserving routines and seeking respite. Realize that you cannot do it all on your own and allow others to help and reach out. There are local support groups available through [Gilda's Club Louisville](#) (583-0075).

Thank you for helping us care for our patients.

