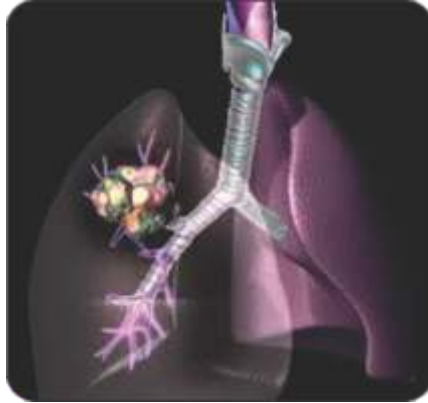




LUNG CANCER



Lung cancer is the most common malignancy and also a leading cause of death worldwide, both in men and women.

What causes lung cancer?

Smoking is the single most important risk factor for causing lung cancer. Risk increases both in active (13 times) and passive (1.5 times) smoking. Main irritants which lead to cancer while smoking are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons such as benzopyrene.

Industrial hazards- Increased exposure to elements such as uranium, nickel, asbestos, cobalt, cadmium etc. is associated with development of lung cancer.

Air Pollution- Dangerous gases as well as smoke produced in the air due to various industries, factories, vehicles etc. and Radon exposure increases the risk.

Scars in the lung- Any scar in the lung mostly due to old infarct or chronic pathology can lead to lung cancer.

Radiation exposure due to any reason, for example, in the treatment of breast and lymphoma.

It is also said that vitamin A deficiency is associated with increase risk while carrots and tomatoes have a protective role in lung cancer.

What are the clinical manifestations of lung cancer?

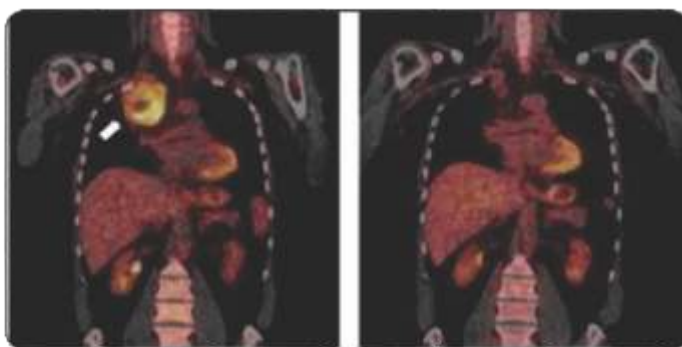
In early stages, lung cancers are completely asymptomatic.

In advanced stages, symptoms include coughing, wheezing, difficulty in breathing, noisy breathing, pain in chest etc.

In locally aggressive disease, patient may complain of breathing difficulties, difficulty in swallowing, voice changes, puffiness of face, prominent veins of neck, shoulder pain etc.

How to diagnose and stage the disease?

In India, good number of cases are misunderstood as tuberculosis and treated as TB patients. Therefore it is essential for any lung mass to be diagnosed properly before starting any treatment. Chest X-ray is the initial investigation. In order to confirm the diagnosis, a flexible tube with attached camera is passed into airway (fiberoptic bronchoscopy), tumor is visualized and biopsy is taken. CT-Scan of chest helps to evaluate the local extension of disease as well as to assess the stage of cancer. In some relevant cases, MRI or PET- Scan is also done to assess the staging and extent in a better way.



What are the treatment options available?

If operable, surgery is the treatment of choice in early stage lung cancer. For all inoperable cases, local radiotherapy as well as systemic chemotherapy is advised. Due to recent advances, we have good number of anticancer drugs to fight the lung cancer.

