Lung Cancer Fact Sheet

- Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer in both men and women in the United States. In 1987, it surpassed breast cancer to become the leading cause of cancer deaths in women.[1]
- Lung cancer causes more deaths than the next three most common cancers combined (colon, breast and prostate). An estimated 162,460 deaths from lung cancer will occur in the United States during 2006.[2]
- Between 1979 and 2003 lung cancer deaths increased by 60 percent. The age-adjusted death rate for lung cancer in males was 74 percent greater than the rate seen in females. The age-adjusted death rate in the black population was 12 percent greater than the rate in the white population.[3]
- Smoking is the most important cause of lung cancer in the United States. It is estimated that 90 percent lung cancer cases are caused by smoking. Other causes include radon, asbestos and air pollution.[4]
- An estimated 351,344 Americans are living with lung cancer.[5] During 2006 an estimated 174,470 new cases of lung cancer will be diagnosed.[6]
- Men have higher rates of lung cancer than females. In 2003, 78.5 per 100,000 men compared to 51.3 per 100,000 women were diagnosed with lung cancer in the United States.[7] However, lung cancer incidence rates have been significantly decreasing among men while the rate has been stable since 1998 in women, after a long period of increases.[8]
- In 2003, the lung cancer incidence rate in black men was 50% higher than that of white men. Rates were similar among black and white women.[9]
- In 2002, Kentucky had the highest age-adjusted lung cancer incidence rates in both males (133.8 per 10,000) and females (73.0 per 100,000). Utah had the lowest age-adjusted cancer incidence rates in both males and females (38.1 per 100,000 and 20.9 per 100,000). These state specific rates were parallel to smoking prevalence rates.[10]
- There are two major types of lung cancer. Non-small cell lung cancer is much more common. It usually spreads to different parts of the body more slowly than small cell lung cancer. Squamous cell carcinoma, ademocarcinoma, and large cell carcinoma are three types of non-small cell lung cancer. Small cell lung cancer also called oat cell cancer, accounts for less than 20% of all lung cancer.[11]
- The expected 5-year survival rate for all patients in whom lung cancer is diagnosed is 15.5 percent compared to 64.8 percent for colon, 89 percent for breast and 99.9 percent for prostate cancer.[12] The 5-year survival rate is 49.3 percent for cases detected when the disease is still localized. However, only 24 percent of lung cancer cases are diagnosed at an early stage. For distant tumors the 5-year survival rate is just over 2 percent.[13]
- About 6 out of 10 people with lung cancer die within 1 year of being diagnosed with the disease. Between 7 and 8 will die within 2 years.[14]
- Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide, accounting for 1.2 million new cases annually. It is the most common diagnosed cancer but with marked regional variation. Over 3 million people have lung cancer, the majority residing in developed countries.[15]

For more information on lung cancer, please review the Lung Cancer Morbidity and Mortality Trend Report in the Data and Statistics section of our website at www.lungusa.org or call the American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872).

Sources:

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2) Ibid.
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4) Alberg AJ and Samet J. Epidemiology of Lung Cancer. Chest. Vol. 123, January 2003.
5) Ries LAG, Eisner MP, Kosary CL, Hankey BF, Miller BA, Clegg L, Mariotto A, Feuer EJ, Edwards BK (eds). SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2003, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD,

http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2003/.
6) American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures, 2006.
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13) Ibid.
14) Ibid.
15) World Health Organization: Global Cancer Rates Could Increase by 50% to 15 Billion by 2020. Available at: http://www/who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2003/pr27/en. Accessed on 7/18/2006.

Additional Resources:

- Lung Cancer Focus - Treatment Webcast
- Lung Cancer Treatment Decision Support
- American Lung Association Announces - The Lung Cancer Discovery Award