

Helping Women Breathe Easy

Lung cancer claims the lives of young women every day. Southeast Georgia Health System is on the frontlines to help stop it.

There is a common misconception that only chronic smokers can develop lung cancer. While smokers are at the greatest risk, at Southeast Georgia Health System, Stephen A. Chitty IV, M.D., Timothy A. Jamieson, M.D., Ph.D., and their colleagues are seeing an uptick in cases among a surprising patient population regardless of nicotine use: young women.

"Many people may think breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in women in the U.S.," says Dr. Chitty, pulmonologist and medical director of critical care at Southeast Georgia Health System's Brunswick Campus. "Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women. However, lung cancer claims more lives by a large margin."

Both smokers and nonsmokers are privy to developing adenocarcinoma, a fatal subtype of lung cancer that forms in the mucosal glands. Southeast Georgia Health System remains on the cutting edge of care, with physicians and staff ready to educate, treat, and guide patients when a lung cancer diagnosis changes their lives.

"If detected early, lung cancer is highly curable," says Dr. Jamieson, a board-certified radiation oncologist and medical director of the Cancer Care Centers and CyberKnife® program.

Women should be aware of the telltale symptoms of lung cancer: a chronic dry cough, shortness of breath, and chest pain. Most may visit their primary care provider when such symptoms begin to impact everyday life, but the earliest sign of an unusual ailment should be investigated.

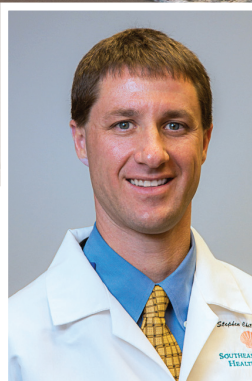
"Women need to be leery of certain symptoms," says Dr. Chitty. "And screenings are important in detecting if a cancerous spot is present."

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

What can women do to decrease their risk of developing lung cancer? The first step is targeted: Don't smoke.

"If you don't smoke, don't start, and if you do smoke, stop as quickly as you can," says Dr. Chitty. "Each cigarette increases your risk."

Next, women should get screened regularly, especially if they have smoked. Southeast Georgia Health System's low-dose computed tomography (CT) scans provide an enhanced option for detecting cancers before symptoms arise. "This option uses a low dose of radiation, thus making it safer," says Dr. Jamieson. "The patient lies on the CT scan table and glides through the imager, so it's not a claustrophobic experience like some patients may feel during an MRI."



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If cancer is detected, Southeast Georgia Health System's CyberKnife treatments are a preferred minimally invasive option. "With CyberKnife, we radiate the lung cancer with a small margin in just three to five radiation sessions," Dr. Jamieson explains. "We do this safely with excellent beam shaping and by tracking the tumor throughout breathing, minimizing the amount of normal lung that receives high-dose radiation."

Tailoring treatment plans to patients' needs and preferences is the goal of Southeast Georgia Health System—and is a reason why both Drs. Chitty and Jamieson are passionate about their work.

"It's rewarding to deliver such excellent technology for the benefit of many patients," says Dr. Jamieson.

"People with lung cancer are vulnerable," Dr. Chitty adds, "and we enjoy helping them through the process."

Talk with your doctor to learn more about lung cancer screenings, or visit sghs.org/lung-cancer-screening for more information. To find a physician, call 855-ASK-SGHS (855-275-7447).



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