

# Spiral CT screening: a good idea, for smokers and many ex-smokers

By ACSH Staff — May 22, 2013

*A new study in today's New England Journal of Medicine lends further support to several recent evaluations of the utility of low-dose, spiral CT scans of the chest to detect lung cancer earlier in heavy smokers. The new report lends perspective and detail to the groundbreaking report which appeared in that same journal in August [...]*

*The post [Spiral CT screening: a good idea, for smokers and many ex-smokers](#) [1] appeared first on [Health & Science Dispatch](#) [2].*

A new [study](#) [3] in today's *New England Journal of Medicine* lends further support to several recent evaluations of the utility of low-dose, spiral CT scans of the chest to detect lung cancer earlier in heavy smokers.

The new report lends perspective and detail to the [groundbreaking report](#) [4] which appeared in that same journal in August of 2011 from the National Lung Screening Trial (NLST), which showed convincingly that annual screening with low-dose (or spiral) CT chest scans reduced mortality from lung cancer in heavy smokers and former smokers by 20 percent. The current study confirms the prior results, and the authors found that the lung cancer death toll reduction was accounted for almost exclusively by detected stage IA cancers, the earliest type those smaller than 4-6 mm (less than ½ inch) and without evidence of spread or local invasion.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross seen, and heard, on the accompanying video interview had this firm point of view: The time for more dithering and studies of this or that population is over as far as spiral CT screening for lung cancers in heavy smokers, whether current or former. The substantial (albeit shy of miraculous at this point) 20 percent reduction in the toll of lung cancer with this simple screening test can, or should, no longer be a matter of contemplation. I'd advise every smoker with a significant smoking history, in terms of duration or intensity, to discuss having the chest CT with his or her doctor. Now. While the downside of false positives is real and of concern, the high risk of lung cancer outweighs that issue. If one-fifth of lung cancer deaths can be prevented, the potential to save well over 10,000 lives is real. Screening for breast cancer and prostate cancer is much less rewarding. Of course, this is not a carte blanche for smokers to keep smoking the best way to avoid the horrors of lung cancer is not to smoke, and to quit as soon as possible.

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