



# What Causes Lung Cancer?

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90% of lung cancer diagnoses in the UAE are caused by smoking, according to the official cancer portal of the national government. However, given that a significant proportion of Emirati youths smoke heavily, and that a mere 150 new cases of lung cancer are identified in the country every year, experts believe that many sufferers are unaware that they might carry the disease.

“Nearly 50% of those who come in for screening are those in advanced stages, of which a majority of the patients succumb to lung cancer,” [says Dr Mohannad Diab](#), a tumour specialist from Abu Dhabi’s NMC Hospital. “Lung, colorectal and breast cancer together account for 30% of the fatalities due to cancer.” As a result, Dr Diab hopes more young people will get themselves checked before it is too late.

## Tobacco leading the charge

By far the biggest contributing factor to contraction of lung cancer is smoking. Almost 90% of those diagnosed with the disease are confirmed heavy smokers, highlighting the strong correlation between the two. While cigarettes are the most pervasive form of tobacco inhalation, other habits such as sheesha or dokha use are equally as damaging to the lungs. Passive smokers are also at risk.

Meanwhile, the remaining 10% of lung cancer sufferers are generally made up of those who are exposed to high concentrations of air pollution on a regular basis, such as blue collar workers who may inhale contaminants such as arsenic, asbestos, carbon, chromium, diesel exhaust fumes, dust particles and radon. Those living in zones where traffic is often congested are prime candidates as well.

The final category of lung cancer patients are those who have a history of the disease in the family. Although cancer is not strictly speaking hereditary, inherited genes can make one more susceptible to cancer. Meanwhile, recent research suggests that [antioxidants may actually help propagate cancer](#) throughout the body, which runs contrary to previous thinking on the topic.

## Early diagnosis, swift treatment

If detected early enough, lung cancer is eminently treatable, claims Dr Redha Souilamas, chairperson of the Thoracic Tumour Board. “However, most young people never come forward for early screening,” [he explains](#). “It is at that stage when lung cancer is completely treatable. If a person has a history of heavy smoking and is past the age of 40, he must come in for screening.”



Dr Souilamas said that the Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi where he works will begin offering low dose CT scans for those wish to verify whether they have the disease at the end of this year, and that the costs of doing so can be fully reimbursed via individual health insurance policies. He hopes this practice will help he and his team gain a better handle on the actuality of the UAE's lung cancer crisis.

What's more, the Cleveland Clinic has also launched its hybrid multimodality management protocol. This programme not only performs the bronchoscopy necessary to determine whether someone is indeed suffering from cancer, but can also undertake the segmentectomy or lobectomy necessary to remove it at the same time. In this way, the patient suffers minimal invasive treatment and is speedily sent on their way to recovery.