

Nina Beaty

LUNG CANCER



Until I got small cell lung cancer, I'd been quite healthy. I was born and raised in Manhattan in an artistic but unfortunately, a heavily smoking family. I started smoking at 15 but by age 30, I realized that I was getting bronchitis every year, and that it was probably due to my smoking, so I quit. I didn't know then that I was still vulnerable.

It's really because my mother had lung cancer that I even got tested.

My mother happened to be one of the first, if not the actual first, to get an early detection low dosage CT scan and only because her internist was aware of her four pack a day smoking history and thought early screening would be of value. It was. My mom did have lung cancer; it was removed surgically, and she went on to live another 16 years, being re-scanned on a regular basis.

In January of 2014, I was visiting her for lunch when her radiologist decided to pop by for a visit. She recommended that, like my mother, I get the early CT scan because I had smoked and had grown up around smokers. Even though I had no symptoms, I decided to get that scan.

Nina Beaty was a patient speaker at the ATS 2018 International Conference in San Diego, California.

“It’s really because my mother had lung cancer that I even got tested... I’m sure we’ll know more in the future.”

The biopsy showed I had a SCLC tumor sitting on top of my left lung in the mediastinal area. Tests showed that was the only spot, so I was staged as “treatable.”

I was determined to survive as long as I could, by getting the best treatment possible. First, at Mt Sinai where I’d had the scan and standard chemoradiation and prophylactic whole brain radiation. Then, after a second tumor showed up in my abdomen, the Mt Sinai doctors sent me to get into a clinical trial at Sloan Kettering.

I’ve been in an immunotherapy trial with Nivolumab for over two years now with no symptoms to speak of.

I’m sure we’ll know more in the future. In the meantime, I will continue to get my infusions every two weeks and live my life as meaningfully as I can. ■

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States and will claim more lives this year than cancer of the breast, prostate, and colon combined. Lung cancers are generally divided into two major types, small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer, classified based on how it looks under a microscope. Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) includes squamous cell carcinoma, large cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma. Small cell cancer (SCLC) tends to grow more quickly than non-small cell cancer. Because it grows more quickly, SCLC is often found when it has spread outside of the lung. Symptoms of lung cancer can vary from person to person. Symptoms of lung cancer include:

- A cough that gets worse or does not go away.
- More trouble breathing (shortness of breath) than usual.
- Coughing up blood.
- Chest pain.
- Hoarse voice.
- Frequent lung infections.
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Weight loss for no known reason.
- Swelling of your face or arms.

Learn more: *ATS Patient Education Series. "Lung Cancer" New York, NY. www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/lung-cancer-intro.pdf*