



WHAT IS BLACK LUNG DISEASE?

Coal worker's pneumoconiosis, more commonly known as black lung disease, is a condition that affects people who have worked in coal mines.

Black lung disease develops when coal mine dust is inhaled over a long period of time. It causes lung tissue to scar as the body fights the dust particles that have settled into the lungs. The damaging effects of the inhaled coal dust may not show up for many years, and some patients don't develop symptoms until long after their initial exposure.

According to the American Lung Association, an estimated 16% of coal workers in the U.S. will contract black lung disease. With changing mining technology that allows for higher volumes of coal to be extracted, that number continues to rise.



The UPMC Lung Transplant Program

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412-648-6202

Find a Location Near You

UPMC Presbyterian
200 Lothrop St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

UPMC Washington
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UPMC Passavant
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BLACK LUNG DISEASE CARE AT UPMC





Symptoms of Black Lung Disease

Black lung disease symptoms are very similar to those found with any form of lung disease. In the beginning stages of coal worker's pneumoconiosis, people will have shortness of breath just from exertion.

Other symptoms include:

- Persistent cough
- Chest tightness
- Fatigue

Risk Factors for Black Lung Disease

The biggest known risk factor for black lung disease is cumulative coal dust exposure. The more exposure, the higher the risk. In the Appalachian region, there is an increasing frequency of more rapidly progressing black lung disease.

Additional risk factors that can impact lung function and the progression of black lung disease include:

- Smoking status
- Genetics
- Age

Diagnosing Black Lung Disease

If you are experiencing symptoms of black lung disease, your doctor will discuss your medical history and ask about your job history to determine the likelihood of exposure. They may perform a physical exam and breathing tests to measure your lungs' ability to move oxygen.

Lung Transplant as a Treatment Option

While there is no treatment that can reverse the damage done by coal dust, there are methods to help manage your symptoms. At UPMC, our team will prescribe medications and breathing treatments to help improve your quality of life.

For severe cases, a lung transplant can be a life-saving treatment option. Because it is a major surgery, a series of tests are required in order to ensure that the rest of the body is healthy enough to withstand the stress.

If you are deemed a candidate and placed on the transplant waiting list, your UPMC transplant coordinator will call you when a donor lung or lungs become available. During a transplant procedure, your surgeon will remove one or both of the diseased lungs and replace them with new, healthy ones. After the transplant, you will gradually feel stronger. We will work with you throughout the recovery process to help you return to your daily activities.

Early referral for a lung transplant is key to achieving a successful outcome. Talk to your doctor if you experience any symptoms of black lung disease or think you may be at risk. The earlier you are referred to a specialist, the sooner your symptoms can be managed and if needed, begin the evaluation process for a lung transplant.

Why Choose UPMC for Your Black Lung Disease Care?

If you are suffering from black lung disease, there is hope in receiving care at UPMC. Our multidisciplinary team of specialists at the UPMC Comprehensive Lung Center and the UPMC Lung Transplant Program are here to provide you with comprehensive and personalized care to help you manage this disease.

Our team at the Comprehensive Lung Center offers diagnosis and second opinion consultations. If lung transplant is the right path for you, our pulmonologists will seamlessly transition your care to the lung transplant team to start the process of advanced treatment.

The UPMC Lung Transplant Program is one of the most recognized and experienced centers in the nation, performing more than **2,500 lung and heart-lung transplants since 1982**. Our team is here to support you and your loved ones throughout each stage of the transplant journey – from pretransplant evaluation to posttransplant follow up care.

There is no age limit to be considered for a transplant, and we encourage patients to be evaluated by our team even if they have been turned down at other centers.

Our team is available to answer any questions or provide additional education and support for you or your loved one with black lung disease.



For more information, or to speak with a member of our team, call 412-648-6202 or visit [UPMC.com/LungTransplant](https://www.upmc.com/LungTransplant).