



UK NSC recommendation on adult screening for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend introducing a national screening programme for COPD.

COPD covers a group of lung conditions that get worse with time. The main symptoms are breathing difficulties and persistent coughing. Smoking tobacco is the main cause of COPD.

There are an estimated 3 million people with COPD in the UK. About 2 million of these will not know that they have the disease. Without quitting smoking or receiving medical treatment their quality of life will worsen.

A screening programme would aim to identify people with COPD early. For this to be useful it should be clear that screening improves smoking quit rates or that medical treatment improves outcomes.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

A national screening programme for COPD is not recommended by the UK NSC because:

- current tests are not reliable in people who have no symptoms of COPD; many people would be wrongly told that they could have COPD
- quitting smoking is the best intervention, but it is not clear whether people with few or no symptoms of COPD would quit if they were told they have it
- there is not enough evidence to understand whether medicines are effective for people with mild COPD which would be detected by screening

Because of this, there is not enough evidence to show whether screening would improve health outcomes.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC's COPD recommendation, please visit:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/copd>

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.gov.uk/uknsc. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).