Lung cancer screening is not a one time exam, but a process that involves periodic follow-up CT exams over time to look for newly emerging cancer. This test can detect tiny nodules in the lungs that are too small to be seen on a chest x-ray. The capability of CT scanners to detect these tiny nodules and to compare for changes in size over time is critical to the screening process.

Research shows low-dose CT scans are effective in reducing lung cancer deaths. WellStar believes that adequate science is available to validate the effectiveness of screening to a defined at risk population. Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer among both men and women killing more people each year than breast, prostate, cervical, and colon cancers combined.

This test uses a small amount of radiation, much like that of a mammogram. Evidence suggests that the risk of cancer caused by lung cancer screening CT scans is very low. Harm can come in the form of improperly done CT scans that inappropriately expose patients to much higher than necessary levels of radiation - another reason why CT screening should only be done at a competent, experienced site that adheres to a well-defined protocol for screening, such as WellStar. Other risks could include the stress of having abnormalities detected and follow-up procedures associated with your exam. Most screening tests have potential risks. Since one in 15 people in the United States will be diagnosed with lung cancer, we believe the risks are minimal compared to the benefits of screening. Research continues to show early detection is the best hope for survival.

As part of the lung cancer screening process, your exam will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team of lung cancer specialists. This team of specialists may include a board certified thoracic surgeon, radiologist, and a pulmonologist. Follow-up recommendations are made based on an established screening protocol. This group of physician specialists are committed to following best published practices to avoid over-treatment and unnecessary invasive procedures.