



A Breath of Hope
LUNG FOUNDATION

Lisa S. was shocked to be diagnosed with lung cancer in March of 2020 as a 49 year-old never-smoker. On a fun vacation in Key West Florida, what Lisa believed to be a cough caused by Florida weather allergies actually had a deeper underlying cause.

As a Wisconsinite, Lisa didn't originally think much about having a cough in Florida, crediting the change in weather and climate compared to Wisconsin as the culprit. However, once she returned home and the cough and chest pressure persisted, she visited a nearby urgent care after learning that her primary care clinic had no openings. Her urgent care doctor ordered a chest x-ray, which immediately showed a nodule. Lisa underwent additional tests that eventually confirmed her lung cancer diagnosis. Despite the tragic news, Lisa knew she was fortunate that a chest x-ray picked up her cancer, as x-rays often miss lung nodules and are much less accurate than a low-dose CT scan.

After being diagnosed with lung cancer, Lisa was initially in denial. "It has to be something else - it couldn't be lung cancer," she thought to herself. However, within two months, her left lung was filled with tumors, she was coughing up blood, and she could hardly function. The progression was aggressive. Thankfully, Lisa's tests identified her as a candidate for a targeted therapy that had good results. Lisa has been doing well on this targeted therapy for three and a half years.

The development of targeted therapies has revolutionized cancer treatment, offering improved efficacy with reduced side effects compared with traditional chemotherapy. Today, Lisa receives a scan every three to four months to make sure the cancer doesn't progress.

While life may be different, Lisa takes advantage of the days she feels her best to do the things she loves like playing pickleball, biking, and even taking a visit to Rocky Mountain National Park. She is fortunate to have her employer's support, and was able to stop working to allow more time to enjoy her favorite things in life and to help her feel better emotionally.

What Lisa wants people to understand is that anyone with lungs can get lung cancer - no one is immune. She says people often say to her "Oh, I didn't know you were a smoker." Lisa has never smoked in her life. The false, unfair and unkind stigma that can be attached to lung cancer is something that people with lung cancer often face. It is Lisa's hope that more people will begin to understand that much of what people believe about lung cancer is actually inaccurate.

