Talk Lung Cancer...

Living Well with Lung Cancer: A Guide for Patients

CP-604499 | October 2026

Johnson&Johnson

Overview and aim

If you are reading this booklet, it is likely you, or someone you know, has been diagnosed with lung cancer. This booklet is intended to help you through your journey, providing general information, tips and guidance on living better and coping with different aspects of your condition.

It's important to know that more people are living longer with lung cancer than ever before.[1] **You should not be alone**, and the support others can provide goes beyond your treatment plan. Your care team, friends, family, loved ones, charities and patient organisations are on hand to provide practical, physical and emotional support at each step of your treatment journey.

This booklet summarises relevant information on lung cancer and signposts to additional resources should you wish to know more. You will also find a notes section at the end of the booklet. This is for you to record any important information or questions you would like to ask your doctor after reading.

Learning about lung cancer

What are the different types of lung cancer?

There are two main types of lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and small cell lung cancer (SCLC), with three different types of NSCLC and two types of SCLC.[2,3] Different types of lung cancer require different treatments.[4]

Knowing the type and stage of lung cancer you have can affect how it's treated and managed.[5]

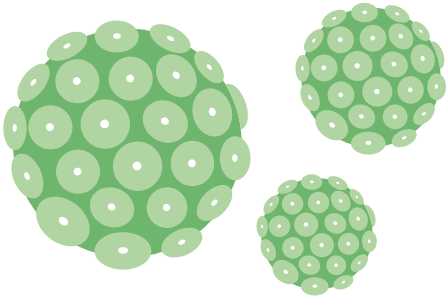
More information about the different types of lung cancer treatment available can be found on page 9.

What is non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)?

NSCLC is the most common form of lung cancer.[6] If you have received a full diagnosis, you may have been identified as having:

- **Adenocarcinoma -** the most common type of NSCLC. It forms in the gland cells that make mucus and is generally found in the outer area of the lung.[2]
- **Squamous cell carcinoma -** another type of NSCLC which forms in the cells that line the airways.[2]
- **Large cell lung carcinoma -** a rare type of NSCLC, which usually starts in the centre of the lungs.[2]

The type of lung cancer you have may impact the type of treatment appropriate for you.[5] Your doctor will let you know what type of lung cancer you have once you have undergone tests to determine what type it is.[7]



What is the difference between NSCLC and SCLC?

SCLC is less common than NSCLC.[6] SCLC is different to NSCLC and often develops at a quicker speed.[4] Knowing what type of lung cancer you have is important and can help steer conversations with your doctor to decide what treatment is best for you.[5]

Coping with a lung cancer diagnosis

What happens after your diagnosis?

A lung cancer diagnosis is an unexpected, life-changing event. Everyone responds to it differently, but it is normal to feel a variety of different emotions, including shock, disbelief, confusion, sadness, anger, guilt and resignation.[8]

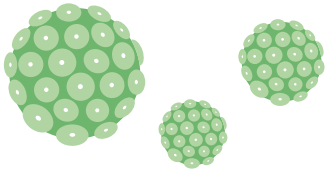
While this may seem overwhelming, it's important to remember that you are not alone in your diagnosis. There are people and organisations that can help you if you need it.

Who can support me with my care journey?

Healthcare professionals

Your care team are there to support you through your lung cancer diagnosis and the rest of your journey. The team will likely be multi-disciplinary, meaning it will include a number of professionals from different specialties, who will help you plan and support you with different aspects of your condition. Your care team may include:[9]

- An oncologist (cancer doctor) who specialises in lung cancer treatments, including radiotherapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted treatments.



- A doctor who specialises in chest and breathing conditions (a pulmonologist).
- A specialist nurse who has experience in caring for people with lung cancer.
- Radiologists who advise your doctor on the results of your x-rays and scans.
- Pathologists who advise your doctor on the type and extent of your cancer.
- A surgeon who specialises in lung cancer.

Your care team may also include specialists to help you manage other areas whilst undergoing treatment, such as a dietitian, psychologist, physiotherapist, psychiatrist, counsellor and pharmacist.

Your friends, family or loved ones

Those closest to you can also play an important role within your lung cancer diagnosis and care journey. It is a good idea to discuss your condition with your friends, family or loved ones, explaining how you feel and suggesting ways in which they could help you with daily activities.

Practical ways they could support you may include:[10]

- Making meals that you can put in your freezer and heat up, so you don't always have to prepare food yourself.
- Driving and coming with you to tests, scans or other health appointments.
- Helping you clean your house or wash your clothes.
- Running errands for you that you would otherwise have to do yourself.
- Providing childcare or picking children up from school, if you have children.
- Joining or assisting with physical exercise.[11]

Mental health and lung cancer

Living with lung cancer can feel like a winding road. Some days you may feel better than usual, and some days you may feel worse. While everyone's lung cancer journey will be different, looking after your mental health is always important.

Coping with a lung cancer diagnosis and ongoing treatment can result in symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress or worry, even in people who have not experienced these kinds of feelings before.[10,12]

You should never feel as if your care team are only there to assist you with your treatment. If you do feel depressed, or are struggling to cope with your diagnosis, they will be able to provide help and ensure you are always supported – whether that be through your care team or from patient organisations. *For more guidance on where to go for emotional support, please refer to the resources available on page 10.*

Receiving treatment for lung cancer

What are the different types of treatment for lung cancer?

Depending on your circumstances, the type and stage of your lung cancer and what is available in your country, you may receive different types of lung cancer treatment. The type of treatment you will receive may change throughout your journey. Sometimes, you may receive a combination of treatments.

Some examples of lung cancer treatment and their potential side effects are listed on the next page.[13]

Type of treatment	Definition	Possible side effects*
Chemotherapy	A combination of different medicines that is used to destroy cancer cells.[13] It is usually administered intravenously (IV), meaning a drip into the vein, or through a tube connected to a blood vessel in your chest.[13] Chemotherapy is sometimes used as a monotherapy (by itself) or in combination with other lung cancer treatments, like immunotherapy.[14]	• Fatigue (extreme tiredness)[13] • Feeling nauseous[13] • Vomiting[13] • Mouth ulcers[13] • Hair loss[13]
Radiotherapy	A treatment that uses pulses of radiation to destroy cancer cells. If you are not suitable for surgery, your doctor may suggest an intensive course of radical radiotherapy.[13]	• Fatigue[13] • Persistent cough[13] • Difficulty swallowing[13] • Redness and soreness of skin[13] • Hair loss on the area being treated[13]
Immunotherapy	A group of medicines that stimulate your immune system to target and destroy cancer cells.[13]	• Fatigue[13] • Feeling and being sick[13] • Diarrhoea[13] • Loss of appetite[13] • Joint or muscle pain[13] • Shortness of breath[15] • Skin changes[13]

*Note that the possible side effects listed are not exhaustive and can vary depending on the treatment and between individuals.

Type of treatment	Definition	Possible side effects*
Targeted treatments	A treatment that can target and destroy cancer cells, without harming healthy cells.[16] This means they may have less side effects than traditional treatments, such as chemotherapy.[17] If your cancer has certain biomarkers, one or several targeted treatments may be available to you.[17] A biomarker is a molecule found in the blood, other body fluids or tissues that can be used to find out how well your body may respond to a particular treatment.[18] You can learn more about biomarkers and what they mean in our Guide to Biomarker Testing.	Side effects can vary greatly depending on the type of targeted treatment. Speak to your doctor about the potential side effects of any course of treatment.[17]
Surgery	Surgery may be recommended if doctors are able to remove the sections of the lung the cancer has spread to, or, in some cases, remove one lung completely.[19] Surgery is more likely to be an option if you have been diagnosed with NSCLC, rather than SCLC.[20,21]	• Adverse reaction to anaesthesia[21] • Excess bleeding[21] • Blood clots in the legs or lungs[21] • Wound infections[21] • Pneumonia[21]

*Note that the possible side effects listed are not exhaustive and can vary depending on the treatment and between individuals.

Always speak to your doctor or care team if you are concerned about any complication or side effect.

Can I make decisions about my treatment plan?

Once you have built an understanding of different treatments and the potential side effects that are associated with them, you may want to have a conversation with your doctor about your options. You can be as involved with the decision-making process as you wish.[22]

Speak to your doctor about what you are looking for from the treatment, how you want to live with lung cancer and any concerns you might have about any proposed treatment. Your input is important to find the right treatment for you and you can always ask for a second opinion if you are not sure.

Do I have access to clinical trials?

There are many ongoing clinical trials investigating lung cancer and new treatments. Depending on the treatment options you are offered, as well as the stage of your lung cancer and other physical considerations, you may want to explore the possibility of participating in a clinical trial.

If this is the case, you can speak to your doctor about what clinical trials are currently available to you.

Palliative care

When curative care is no longer an option, your care team can provide you with treatments to relieve pain and emotional support during this difficult time.[23] This is often referred to as palliative care, which is a multi-disciplinary approach aimed at improving quality of life and reducing symptoms.[24] Your care plan will be developed with you. Some people choose to be cared for in a hospital at later stages, others may prefer a hospice or to be looked after in their own home.[23]

Your doctor will always consider what services are available to you locally and provide advice based on your personal circumstances and preferences.

Physical activity

Alongside your treatment, consider the positive effects that physical activity can have on your condition, as well as your general health and mental wellbeing.

Regular exercise can improve your quality of life, helping you feel physically stronger and less fatigued, but it's important to seek your doctor's advice first to understand what level of exercise is appropriate for you.

What types of exercise are appropriate for people with lung cancer?

Choosing or starting a new exercise can feel overwhelming, particularly when coping with cancer. Some exercises that might be beneficial for you have been provided below. These are only suggestions. You don't need to try all of the exercises, but it's important to find some movement you enjoy doing.

Stretching[11]

Stretching increases the flow of blood and oxygen to your muscles.

Upper body stretching can help if you are experiencing shortness of breath, as it increases your chest cavity (the area surrounded by your ribs and diaphragm) and lung capacity.

Lightly stretching other parts of your body is also important if you have radiation therapy, which can tighten your muscles.

In general, stretching can also help combat the stress and anxiety of living with lung cancer.

Aerobic exercise[11]

150 minutes of exercise a week is typically recommended for people living with lung cancer. Your condition may make it harder to exercise in the same way you used to, so setting short-term, achievable goals can help you maintain a good exercise routine.

Walking, dancing or any other activity which increases your heart rate are great examples of aerobic exercise. Improving your fitness will help strengthen the heart and improve your oxygen capacity.

Strength training[11]

Treatments like chemotherapy and radiation therapy can weaken your muscles. Strength training can help you counter this process by building your muscles, which can make everyday tasks easier.

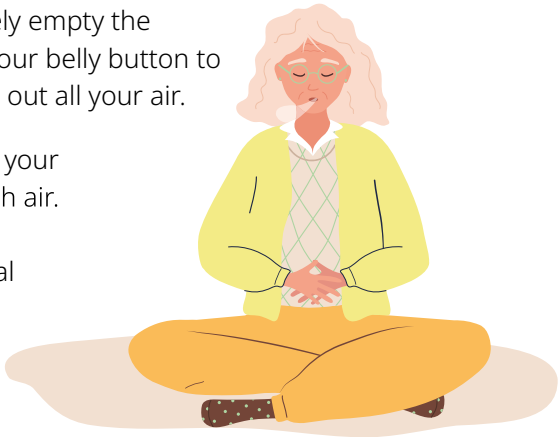
Strength training can also help you improve your balance and posture.

Always speak to your doctor before starting a new physical exercise.

Breathing exercises[11]

In addition to physical exercise, you may also benefit from breathing exercises. They can help improve your endurance, making it easier to complete daily activities and start an exercise program. One key exercise you can try is called **diaphragmatic breathing**:[11]

1. While sitting or standing up straight, place your hands on your stomach.
2. Breathe in through your nose while gently pushing your stomach out. The hand placed on your stomach moves outward. This allows the diaphragm to lower, which increases lung capacity.
3. Breathe out slowly through tightly pressed lips (pursed lips), while gently pushing inward and upward with the hand on the stomach to help completely empty the lungs. Imagine pressing your belly button to your spine as you breathe out all your air.
4. Slowly breathe in through your nose, filling your lungs with air.
5. Repeat the exercise several times a day.



Nutrition and eating well

It can be difficult to keep eating well once you have been diagnosed with lung cancer. It is normal to experience weight loss when dealing with lung cancer. In fact, around 60% of people with lung cancer have a loss of appetite or experience significant weight loss at the time of their diagnosis.[25]

Keeping track of your weight is important. Your doctor may want to find out what is causing your weight loss if you lose more than 5% of your normal weight over 6–12 months.[25]

You can keep track of your weight by weighing yourself regularly and keeping track of the results in a diary or inputting the results into a mobile application.

What's the best way of eating well with lung cancer?

There is no right way of eating well, but maintaining your body weight and sticking to a balanced, healthy diet is important when living with lung cancer. If you are experiencing a low appetite and are finding it difficult to maintain your body weight, you could try the following:[26]

Smaller meals

If a large plateful feels daunting, you may find it easier to eat three small meals a day with supplementary snacks and drinks.

Softer foods

Having lung cancer can make some foods feel harsh on your throat. Switching to soft or moist foods like soups and stews can make mealtimes easier.

Avoid drinking before eating

Drinking large quantities of liquid may make you feel full and reduce your appetite. Avoiding drinks before mealtimes may help you consume more food.

Speak to your care team if you are concerned or unsure about any of the above points, or wish to try these.

Financial support

If you have to reduce or stop work because of your lung cancer diagnosis, this might impact your financial situation. This can potentially add stress and anxiety during an already difficult time.

Organisations such as local authorities, charities or financial institutions may be able to support you during this time. They can share tips to help you manage your money better, offer advice on budgeting or provide support if you need to apply for additional money. Understanding what resources are available to you can help you feel more at ease about your financial situation.

Helpful resources

Where can I find people like me?

Support groups provide a place people living with lung cancer can share advice and experiences with each other and can be hugely beneficial. If you'd like to join a support group, your doctor, support nurse or cancer support charity will be able to help you find groups that are local to you.

Irish Lung Cancer Community: **ilcc.ie**

Marie Keating Foundation: **mariekeating.ie**

Irish Cancer Society: **www.cancer.ie**

Questions for your care team

- What does a lung cancer diagnosis mean for me?
- What type of lung cancer do I have?
- What stage of lung cancer do I have?
- Do I need to have any more diagnostic tests?
- Are biomarker tests available to me?
- What are the pros and cons of each treatment type?
- Will there be side effects? How will these affect my day-to-day life?
- How long will each course of treatment last?
- What is the most likely outcome of treatment?
- Are you aware of any clinical trials that are available to me?
- What happens next?
- What support services can my hospital offer me?
- What can I do to reduce feelings of stress and anxiety?
- What exercise would be best for me considering my diagnosis?
- What kind of foods should I be eating with my diagnosis?
- What should I do if I lose my appetite?
- How and where can I access mental health support should I need it?

Answers

Answers (continued)

Notes/questions for your doctor

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Talk Lung Cancer has been developed by Johnson & Johnson, with input from the following Patient Advocacy Groups and healthcare professionals.

Independent representatives

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CP-604499 | October 2026