



What to expect during each stage of treatment and beyond

## Lung cancer

This information sheet tells you what you can ask for before, during and after your lung cancer treatment. You can ask your team for more information and support.

Working with your team means you can make sure you are getting the treatment, information and support that is right for you.

### 1. Symptoms of lung cancer

- Coughing up blood
- A cough or chest infection that doesn't go away
- Chest or shoulder pain

- Hard to breathe
- Change in voice

**If these last more than three weeks, go to your doctor.**

### 2. Your doctor visit

Your doctor should do a check up to see if they can find what is making you feel unwell.

Your doctor should work with you to make sure you have the information and help you need. You can ask your doctor about:

- What is happening in your body and why it could be happening
- What will or might happen
- How you are feeling and how to stay emotionally healthy
- Who you can talk to and getting the support you need

- Where you can get more information and support

Your doctor might send you to get more tests with a specialist. Your specialist is a doctor that is trained in working with people with lung cancer.

Your doctor should give the specialist information on your health in the past, if someone else in your family has cancer and your test results.

**You can bring a family member or friend to your visits. You can ask your doctor for more information and support to make sure you have what you need.**

### 3. Tests

The specialist should do tests to see if you have lung cancer. This is called a diagnosis. If you do have lung cancer, the tests will show how the cancer is growing or if it has spread. This is called staging.

You can ask the specialist:

- What tests you are going to have
- What will happen in the tests
- What the tests will tell you

**You might have one test or a mix of tests:**

#### Computed tomography scan (CT scan)

Computers and x-rays are used to make a detailed picture of the lungs.

#### Position emission tomography scan (PET)

A small amount of radioactive material is injected and your whole body is scanned to show where the cancer is.

### 3. Tests cont'd

#### X-Ray

An x-ray takes a picture to see if there is anything wrong with your lungs.

#### Bronchoscopy

A tube is used to look inside your lungs and take samples. This is done under anaesthetic.

#### Endobronchial ultrasound (EBUS)

A type of bronchoscopy where sound waves are used to make a picture of the lungs.

#### Biopsy

A small sample of your lung is taken to check under the microscope.

Some people have more tests such as a bone scan.

**You can ask your doctor about finding a lung cancer peer support group. It can help knowing that there are other people who understand what you are going through. Your friends and family can talk to a support group for carers.**

### 4. Treatment

Your specialist should work with a team. Your team is made up of people that understand lung cancer.

Your team will review your test results. They should ask you what you want and need. You should work together to make the best plan for your treatment.

You can ask your team:

- What treatment you are having
- Why you are having that treatment
- What will happen in that treatment
- What the treatment will do
- How long the treatment will take
- Risks and benefits of the treatment
- How you might feel during the treatment, side effects and what you can do to feel as well as possible
- What you can expect after the treatment

Your team might suggest you take part in a clinical trial. A clinical trial is used to test a new treatment, or to see if a treatment works better than another. You can ask for more time, or a second opinion before you decide on your treatment.

You might have one treatment or a mix of treatments:

**Radiation therapy** (also called radiotherapy) is where radiation is used to stop the cancer growing. It is used if surgery is not a good option. Radiation therapy might be used alone, or with chemotherapy.

**Chemotherapy** or drug therapy is where drugs are used to stop the cancer growing.

It might be used before or after surgery. It can also be used if surgery is not a good option. Chemotherapy might be used alone, or with radiation therapy.

**Surgery** is where the cancer is cut out.

It is the most common treatment for people with early lung cancer. This should be done by a surgeon who is very experienced at lung surgery.

**Palliative care** is used at all stages of your treatment. It helps reduce your symptoms and any side effects of treatment. It can help you feel well.

Complementary therapies include things like massage, acupuncture and meditation as well as other medicines you might take at the same time as your treatment.

Some therapies might not work well with your treatment. Therefore, it is very important to talk to your team about any complementary therapies you are using, or would like to use.

## 4. Treatment cont'd

The treatment you have depends on if the cancer is in one lung, both lungs, or if it has spread to other parts of your body. Lung cancer is often not found until it has spread. This is because it can grow quickly, and the symptoms can be unclear.

For more information about treatment and side-effects you can ask your doctor or **visit** [www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment](http://www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment)

**Your team should talk to you about your needs before, during and after your treatment. You can ask for information and support at any time to make sure you have everything you need.**

**Your team can connect you with other services and health professionals to make sure you stay physically and mentally well.**

## 5. After your treatment

After your treatment is finished, your team should give you a treatment summary. Your treatment summary has all of the information on the treatment you received:

- Tests you had to diagnose your lung cancer, and the results of these tests
- Treatment you had, and when you had it
- Support services and other treatment plans you received

Your team should work with you to make a plan now that your treatment is finished. Your specialist will decide which medical specialist is best placed to manage your ongoing care

You should have a follow-up plan that includes:

- The follow-up that is best for you
- Plans for managing any side effects of treatment

- How to get help quickly if you think your cancer has come back or got worse

Your doctor should work with you and talk about:

- Finding more information and support to keep physically and emotionally well, and get what you need
- Signs and symptoms to look for that might mean the cancer is coming back
- Prevention and healthy living

**Sometimes lung cancer can come back after treatment.**

**It is usually found at a follow up visit, or if you notice any symptoms come back. It is important to have regular check-ups.**

**If you notice anything different go to your doctor. You can ask your doctor for a check-up and for information and support.**

## 6. Living with cancer

### Side effects

Some people get side effects during and after their treatment. Side effects are your body responding to the treatment you are having. They are normal, but can make you feel unwell.

You might have side effects straight away, not at all, or months after your treatment.

You can talk to your doctor about your side effects and get information and support to help you feel well or **visit** [www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/survivors/long-term-side-effects](http://www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/survivors/long-term-side-effects)

### Advanced care plan

Your team might work with you to make an

advanced care plan. An advanced care plan is a way of setting out your wishes and making sure everyone knows what you want in future medical care.

You can talk to your doctor about making an advanced care plan together or **visit** [www.advancecareplanning.org.au](http://www.advancecareplanning.org.au)

### Palliative care

Palliative care is used at different stages of your treatment to help you feel well.

Palliative care can help with pain relief, to reduce your symptoms and to improve your quality of life.

## 6. Living with cancer cont'd

You can talk to your doctor about the type of palliative care that is best for you or **visit** [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au)

### Cost

There are costs at every stage of your cancer including treatment, accommodation and travel. You might have costs if you are having treatment in a private health service even if you have private health insurance.

You can talk to your team and your private health insurer if you have questions about the cost of each treatment you might have. You can also talk to the social worker at your hospital.

You can talk to your doctor about the cost of your treatment or **visit** [www.canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/living-cancer/dealing-practical-aspects-cancer/costs-treatment](http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/living-cancer/dealing-practical-aspects-cancer/costs-treatment)

You can talk to your doctor about the cost of accommodation and travel or **visit** [www.cancercouncil.com.au/get-support/practical-support-services](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/get-support/practical-support-services)

**There are a lot of things to think about when you have lung cancer.**

**There is also a lot of information and support. It is important that you do what is right for you. You can work with your team to make sure you have the best care.**

## Information and support

### Cancer Council

- You can talk to a cancer nurse: **13 11 20**
-  If you need an interpreter: **13 14 50**

### Lung Foundation

- Information and support: **1800 654 301**
- [www.lungfoundation.com.au](http://www.lungfoundation.com.au)

### Carers Australia

- Information and support for carers: **1800 242 636**

For more information visit  
[www.cancerpathways.org.au](http://www.cancerpathways.org.au)



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