



# After a Lung Cancer Diagnosis

If you have been told you have lung cancer, you have probably already had x-rays, scans, and a biopsy (a test that takes some tissue to check for cancer). Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells to check for certain proteins and gene changes. You might also have more scans or other procedures to find out if the cancer has spread. These tests help your doctor know what type of lung cancer you have, what stage it is, and what treatment might help.

There are many ways to treat lung cancer, including surgery, radiation, and medicines such as chemo, targeted drug therapy, or immunotherapy. Many times, more than one type of treatment is needed. Treatment mostly depends on things like the type and stage of your lung cancer. Your treatment choices also depend on the results of the tests on the cancer cells, health problems you may have, and your personal choices. Your doctor will help you decide which treatments are best for you.

## Be sure to ask:

- What type of lung cancer do I have?
- What stage is my lung cancer, and what does that mean?
- What else have you learned about my lung cancer from my test results?
- Will I need more tests?
- What treatments do you think are best for my lung cancer?
- What are the likely side effects from treatment?

## What to expect during treatment

Your cancer care team will explain your treatment plan to you. This team may include different doctors, nurses, and other health care workers, depending on the type of treatment you need. For example, if you need radiation therapy, you will work with your radiation oncologist to

know what to expect before, during, and after radiation treatment. If you need other types of treatment, your doctor or cancer care team will explain how it is given, help you get ready for it, keep track of how you're doing, and help you with any side effects. You might also get blood tests, x-rays, or scans at certain times to see how well your treatment is working.

Not everyone going through treatment for lung cancer will have the same side effects. For example, the side effects of surgery are different from the side effects of chemo, targeted drug therapy, immunotherapy, or radiation treatments. And people getting the same treatment might have different side effects.

## Be sure to ask:

- What are my treatment options? What do you think is best for me and why?
- What is the goal of treatment?
- What side effects might I have, and what can I do about them?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- How often will I get treatment, and how long will it last?
- Where will I go to get treatment, and can I drive myself?
- Will I be able to keep doing my usual activities, like work and exercise?

## What to expect after treatment

After treatment, your doctor will help you deal with any side effects you might still have. You will also have regular tests to check if your cancer has come back, or to check if a new cancer has started in a different part of your body.

For some people, the cancer might not go away completely. They might continue to get treatment, and tests will still be needed to see how well it's working.

Be sure to tell your doctor or someone on the cancer care team if you have any side effects that don't go away after treatment or any new symptoms.

You might also have a hard time coping with changes to your body after treatment. For example, your lungs might not work as well as they did before. If trouble breathing limits what you can do, ask your cancer care team if pulmonary rehabilitation or pulmonary therapy might help.

Even if you've finished treatment and may feel fine, it is important to ask your cancer care team about a regular schedule for follow-up tests to check if lung cancer has come back.

### Be sure to ask:

- How often do I need to see my cancer care team?
- Will I need tests to see if my cancer has come back, or to check for problems from my treatment?
- Do I need any screening tests, like a mammogram or colonoscopy, to find other common cancers early?
- Do I need a follow-up plan after treatment?
- Are there late or long-term side effects from treatment that I should watch for?
- Do you think that pulmonary rehabilitation or pulmonary therapy might help me?
- When and how should I contact my cancer care team?
- Where can I find my medical records after treatment?

## Staying healthy

There are things you can do to keep yourself healthy during and after treatment for lung cancer. Quitting smoking can help some people with lung cancer live longer. Eating well, being active, getting to and staying at a healthy weight, and avoiding alcohol can help you. Avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke and radon in your home and workplace are also important. These things can help lower your risk of getting a new lung cancer or other cancers.

Remember to get screened for other kinds of cancers and continue getting checked for other health problems. Talk to your doctor about the screening and testing plan that's right for you.

## Dealing with your feelings

Having lung cancer might make you feel scared, sad, or nervous. Whether you smoked or not, you might feel guilty or judged for having lung cancer. It is normal to have these feelings, and there are ways to help you cope with them.

- Don't try to deal with your feelings by yourself. Talk about your feelings, no matter what they are.
- It's OK to feel sad or down once in a while, but let your cancer care team know if you have these feelings for more than a few days.
- Do things you enjoy like going to a movie, out to dinner, spending time outdoors, or to a sporting event, if your doctor says it's OK.
- Get help with tasks like cooking and cleaning.

You might want to reach out to friends, family, or religious leaders or groups. Some people find it helpful to talk with others who've been through the same things. A support group can offer that. Others might be helped by getting counseling. Tell your cancer care team how you are feeling. They can help you find the right support.

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support,  
call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or  
visit us online at **cancer.org/lungcancer**. We're here when you need us.



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