



Lung cancer: English

This information is about lung cancer and treatments for lung cancer.

This information is about primary lung cancer, which is cancer that starts in the lung. It does not cover secondary lung cancer, which is cancer that starts somewhere else in the body and spreads to the lungs.

If you have any questions about this information, ask your doctor or nurse at the hospital where you are having treatment.

You can also call Macmillan Cancer Support on freephone **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your own language. When you call us, please tell us in English which language you need.

There is more cancer information in this language and other languages at macmillan.org.uk/translations

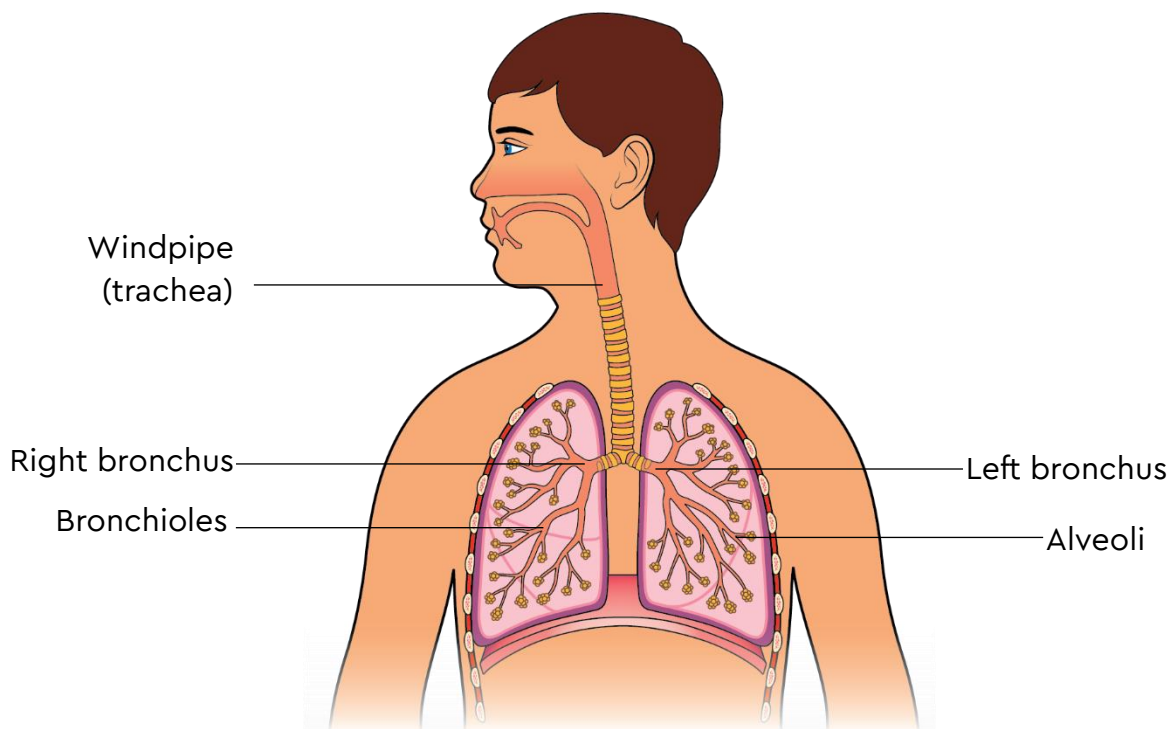
This information is about:

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- How treatment is planned
- Talking to your healthcare team
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The lungs

The lungs are the parts of the body that we use to breathe. We have 2 lungs – one on the right side of our body and one on the left side. The lungs are divided into areas called lobes. The right lung has 3 lobes, and the left lung has 2 lobes.

When we breathe in, air passes from our nose or mouth through to the windpipe. This is sometimes called the trachea. It divides into two tubes, one going to each lung. These are called the right bronchus and left bronchus. They divide into smaller tubes called bronchioles. At the end of the bronchioles are millions of tiny air sacs called alveoli. This is where oxygen from the air we breathe goes into the blood.



Lung cancer

All parts of the body are made up of tiny cells. Lung cancer happens when cells in the lung grow in an uncontrolled way and form a lump called a tumour.

There are 2 main types of lung cancer:

- **non-small cell lung cancer** – this is the most common lung cancer. There are 3 main types: adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and large cell lung cancer.
- **small cell lung cancer** – about 10 to 15 in 100 (10% to 15%) of lung cancers are small cell lung cancers.

Most lung cancers are caused by smoking cigarettes. But about 15 in 100 (15%) people who get lung cancer have never smoked.

If you smoke, your doctor will usually advise you to stop smoking. This can:

- make your treatment work better
- reduce side effects
- improve your long-term health.

Your doctor or hospital can offer you support and advice to help you to stop smoking.

Lung cancer is not infectious and cannot be passed on to other people.

Stages of lung cancer

The stage of a cancer describes how big it is and whether it has spread.

Sometimes, cancer cells can spread to other parts of the body through the blood or lymphatic system. The lymphatic system helps protect us from infection and disease. It is made up of fine tubes called lymphatic vessels. These vessels connect to groups of small lymph nodes throughout the body. If cancer cells spread outside the lungs, they are most likely to go to lymph nodes nearby in the chest.

Your doctor can plan the best treatment for you when they know the stage of cancer you have.

Lung cancer is divided into four stages:

- **Stage 1** – the cancer is small and only in the lung.
- **Stage 2 or 3** – the cancer in the lung is bigger. It may have spread to nearby lymph nodes, other parts of the lung and areas around the lung.
- **Stage 4** – the cancer has spread further, for example, to the other lung or to other parts of the body.

If you have small cell lung cancer, your doctors might use a different staging system. This divides lung cancer into two stages – limited disease and extensive disease. Your doctor will explain this system to you.

How treatment is planned

Your cancer team will meet to plan the best treatment for you. They will then talk to you about the treatment plan. The treatment you have will depend on:

- the type of lung cancer you have
- the stage of the cancer
- the results of tests done on the lung cancer cells
- your general health
- how able you are to do day-to-day things
- your treatment preferences
- lung cancer treatment guidelines.

Talking to your healthcare team

It is important to talk about the treatment plan with your cancer doctor or nurse. Your hospital can arrange an interpreter for you. Let your nurse know if you need one. You may also want to take someone with you who can speak your language and English.

After talking with you, your doctor will ask you to sign a form to show that you understand what the treatment means and that you agree to having it. This is called giving your consent. You will not be given treatment unless you have agreed to it.

Questions to ask about your treatment

Here are some questions you might want to ask your healthcare team about your treatment:

- What is the aim of my treatment?
- Which treatments are available?
- What are the benefits, risks and side effects of each treatment?
- How will the treatment affect my daily life?
- Who can I talk to about how I am feeling?

Treatments for lung cancer

Treatments for lung cancer include:

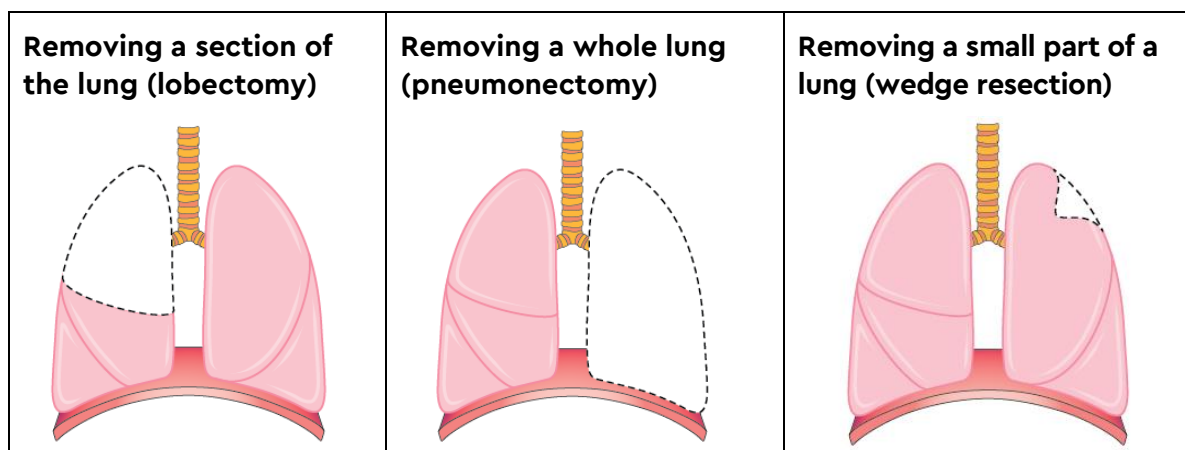
- an operation (surgery)
- chemotherapy
- radiotherapy
- targeted therapy
- immunotherapy.

You may have more than one type of treatment.

Surgery

Some people will be able to have surgery to remove the cancer. This depends on the type and stage of the cancer, and your general health. Surgery is rarely used to treat small cell lung cancer.

Lung cancer surgery is a big operation, and you need to be well enough to cope with it. Before surgery, you will have tests to check how well your lungs are working. The three main operations to remove lung cancer are shown below.



If the cancer has spread to 2 lobes next to each other, the surgeon may remove 2 lobes. This is sometimes called a bilobectomy.

We have more information in your language about surgery in your language. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy uses drugs to destroy cancer cells. It is used to treat both non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer. It is often the first treatment for small cell lung cancer.

For non-small cell lung cancer, chemotherapy may be given:

- Before or after surgery.
- Together with radiotherapy – this is called chemoradiation. This may be used for people who cannot have or do not want to have surgery.
- Before or after radiotherapy.
- With an immunotherapy drug before surgery.
- With, or before or after a targeted or immunotherapy drug, to people with a more advanced cancer.
- To help relieve symptoms.

Chemotherapy is usually given as several sessions of treatment, with rest periods in between the sessions. The treatment is usually given into a vein by a drip or injection. Your doctor will tell you how many treatment sessions you will need and how long it will take. It may take several months to complete your course of chemotherapy.

Some people with non-small cell lung cancer continue with chemotherapy if it is working well. This is sometimes called maintenance treatment.

Chemotherapy drugs can cause side effects that make you feel unwell. Different drugs can cause different side effects.

These include:

- bigger risk of infection
- feeling tired
- feeling sick or being sick
- a sore mouth
- hair loss.

If you have chemotherapy with radiotherapy the side effects can be worse. Your doctor can talk to you about the side effects you may have, and how to manage them. Most side effects can be controlled with drugs. Most side effects go away when chemotherapy is over.

We have more information about chemotherapy in your language on our website. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy uses high-energy rays called radiation to destroy cancer cells. It can be used to treat both non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer.

Radiotherapy may be given:

- on its own instead of surgery
- after surgery – this is for people with non-small cell lung cancer
- with chemotherapy – this is called chemoradiation
- before or after chemotherapy
- to the head, to stop any lung cancer cells that have spread from growing into a secondary cancer in the brain – this is for people with small cell lung cancer
- to help relieve symptoms.

External beam radiotherapy is given from a radiotherapy machine. It aims high-energy rays at the area of the body being treated.

There are different types of external beam radiotherapy, depending on if you are being treated for non-small cell lung cancer or small cell lung cancer. Your cancer doctor will tell you more about the type of radiotherapy you are having.

Many people have radiotherapy as an outpatient. This means you come to hospital for treatment and then go home again that day.

Radiotherapy can have some side effects. These include:

- difficulty swallowing
- tiredness
- skin changes
- breathlessness and a cough.

Your healthcare team will explain the side effects so you know what to expect.

We have more information about radiotherapy in your language.

Visit [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

Targeted therapy

Targeted therapy drugs may be used to treat some non-small cell lung cancers. You will have tests on the cancer cells to check which cancer drugs are more likely to work for you. There are different types of targeted therapy for lung cancer. They work in slightly different ways

You may have a targeted therapy drug:

- on its own
- after or with chemotherapy
- after lung cancer surgery.

You take them as tablets or capsules. If a drug is likely to work well for you, it may be given as your first treatment. Side effects depend on the type of drug you have. Your healthcare team can explain more about side effects and how to manage them.

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy drugs help your immune system to find and attack cancer cells. They are usually used to treat non-small cell lung cancer. There are different types of immunotherapy drug. You may have tests on the cancer cells to see how likely these drugs are to be helpful. The drugs are given into a vein through a drip. Immunotherapy may be given:

- on its own
- with chemotherapy
- with a targeted therapy drug or another immunotherapy drug
- after lung cancer surgery or sometimes with chemotherapy before surgery.

Different immunotherapy drugs can cause different side effects. Your cancer team will give you information about possible side effects before you start treatment. It is very important to follow your doctor's advice about side effects.

Other treatments

Other treatments can also be used to treat lung cancer or to control symptoms.

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) uses heat to destroy cancer cells. The doctor puts a needle into the tumour and passes an electrical current through it to destroy the cancer cells. Microwave ablation is similar to RFA but uses microwave energy.

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) uses laser or other light sources to destroy cancer cells. First, you are given a drug that is sensitive to light. After a day or a few days, the doctor passes a tube down your windpipe and shines a light onto the tumour in your lung. The light makes the light sensitive drug destroy the cancer cells.

Controlling symptoms

If the cancer is advanced, you may have symptoms such as breathlessness, cough, pain or a build-up of fluid. There are lots of ways to control any symptoms you may have. Your doctor can give you different drugs or medicines to help with symptoms. Always tell your doctor if symptoms do not improve.

Blocked airway

Sometimes, lung cancer can cause a blockage or narrowing of the airways. This can cause breathlessness. Different treatments can be used to help a blocked airway:

- Cryosurgery uses very cold temperatures to freeze and destroy cancer cells.
- Some treatments use an electrical current to destroy cancer cells.
- Laser therapy can shrink the cancer and prevent it from blocking the airways.
- A small tube called a stent can be put into the airway to keep it open.

A build-up of fluid

Sometimes fluid can build up in the layers that cover the lung. If this happens, your doctors can put a tube in to drain the fluid.

After treatment

After your treatment has finished, you will have regular check-ups and may also have tests. At first they will be every few months, but over time you will have them less often.

If you notice any new symptoms between check-ups, tell your GP or cancer team as soon as possible.

Your feelings

You may feel overwhelmed when you are told you have cancer. You may have many different emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel. There are many ways to cope with this. Talking to a close friend or relative may help. Your doctor or nurse can help too.

Getting the right care and support for you

If you have cancer and do not speak English, you may be worried that this will affect your cancer treatment and care. But your healthcare team should offer you care, support and information that meets your needs.

We know that sometimes people may have extra challenges in getting the right support. For example, if you work or have a family you might also have worries about money and transport costs. All of this can be stressful and hard to cope with.

How Macmillan can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

Macmillan Support Line

We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your language. Just tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

Our expert advisers on the Macmillan Support Line can help with medical questions or be there to listen if you need someone to talk to. We can also talk to you about your money worries and recommend other useful organisations that can help. The free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan website

Our website has lots of information in English about cancer. There is also more information in other languages at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

We may also be able to arrange translations just for you. Email informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk to tell us what you need.

Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. Find your nearest centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Local support groups

At a support group, you can talk to other people affected by cancer. Find out about support groups in your area at macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan Online Community

You can also talk to other people affected by cancer online at macmillan.org.uk/community

You can access it at any time of day or night. You can share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts.

More information in your language

We have information in your language about these topics:

Signs and symptoms of cancer

- Signs and symptoms cards

If you are diagnosed with cancer

- Cancer care in the UK
- Healthcare for refugees and people seeking asylum
- If you are diagnosed with cancer

Types of cancer

- Bowel cancer
- Breast cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer

Treatment for cancer

- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Sepsis and cancer
- Side effects of cancer treatment
- Surgery

Living with cancer

- Claiming benefits when you have cancer
- Eating problems and cancer
- Healthy eating
- Help with costs when you have cancer
- LGBTQ+ people and cancer
- Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer

End of life

- End of life

To see this information, go to macmillan.org.uk/translations

References and thanks

This information has been written and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been translated into this language by a translation company.

The information included is based on our lung cancer content available in English on our website.

This information has been reviewed by relevant experts and approved by Senior Medical Editor Dr David Gilligan, Consultant Clinical Oncologist.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this information.

All our information is based on the best evidence available. For more information about the sources we use, please contact us at informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk

Content reviewed: 2025

Next planned review: 2028

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