Understanding Cancer of the Lung

This booklet has been written to help you understand more about lung cancer. It has been prepared and checked by surgeons, cancer doctors, other relevant specialists, nurses, radiation therapists and patients. The information in this booklet is an agreed view on lung cancer, its diagnosis and treatment and the key aspects of living with it.

If you are a patient, your doctor or nurse may go through the booklet with you and mark sections that are important for you. You can also list below any contact names and information that you may need.

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This booklet has been produced by Nursing Services of the Irish Cancer Society to meet the need for improved communication, information and support for cancer patients and their families throughout diagnosis and treatment. We would like to thank all those patients, families and professionals whose support and advice made this publication possible.

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Introduction

This booklet has been written to help you learn more about lung cancer. It describes how it is diagnosed and treated, and some side-effects of treatment. We hope the booklet answers some of your questions and encourages you to discuss them with your doctors and nurses. This booklet is about primary lung cancer, where cancer has started in the lung. It should not be confused with secondary lung cancer, where cancer that has started in another part of your body has spread to your lung. The treatment of secondary lung cancer is different.

We cannot advise you about which treatment to choose. You can only make this decision along with your doctor, when all your test results are ready. But we can help you learn about some of the methods used to treat this cancer and some side-effects that can happen when treatment is given.

This booklet also discusses some of the feelings you and those close to you may have when a diagnosis of cancer is made. At the end of the booklet you will find a list of books that are useful to read. There is also a list of websites and special groups to help and support you at this time.

Reading this booklet

Remember you do not need to know everything about lung cancer straight away. Read a section about a particular item as it happens to you. Then when you feel relaxed and want to know more, read another section. If you do not understand something that has been written, discuss it with your doctor or nurse. You can also call the National Cancer Helpline Freefone on 1800 200 700. It is open Monday to Thursday 9am–7pm and Friday 9am–5pm. You can also visit a Daffodil Centre if one is located in your hospital. See page 68 for more about Daffodil Centres.

National Cancer Helpline Freefone 1800 200 700

About lung cancer

What is cancer?

Cancer is a word used to describe a group of diseases, not just one. There are more than 200 different types of cancer. Each is named after the organ or type of cell in which the cancer starts growing. For example, prostate cancer, breast cancer and leukaemia. All cancers are a disease of the body’s cells, which are the building blocks of your body. Normally, cells grow and divide in a controlled way and replace old cells to keep your body healthy. But with cancer, the abnormal cells grow without control.

Groups of abnormal cells can form a growth or tumour. Tumours can be either benign or malignant. Benign tumours do not spread to other parts of your body but malignant tumours usually do. This happens when a cell or group of cells breaks away and is carried by your bloodstream or lymph vessels to other tissues and organs in your body. This is called a metastasis or secondary tumour.

What are lymph vessels?

Lymph vessels are part of your lymphatic system, which helps your body defend itself against infection. Like your bloodstream, it carries waste material around your body from your tissues. It is made up a network of tiny tubes that pass through most of the tissues in your body. These tubes carry lymph, a clear watery fluid that is leaked into your tissues and returned to your body. Along the network are hundreds of small glands and nodes which remove the lymph. They are mainly found in your neck, armpit and groin. Lymph nodes can trap cancer and as a result grow bigger and hard.
What are the lungs?

The lungs are a pair of organs found in your chest. They are shaped like cones and have two parts, the right and the left. The right lung is slightly bigger and has three areas called lobes, while the left lung has two lobes. Between the two lungs is an area called the mediastinum. This contains your heart, trachea (windpipe), oesophagus (gullet) and many lymph nodes.

How do the lungs work?

Your lungs form part of the respiratory system in your body, which allows you to breathe.

When you breathe in, you bring air into your lungs. The air passes from your nose or mouth down through your windpipe. From there it divides into two airways called the right and left bronchi, which go to each lung. These bronchi then divide into smaller tubes called bronchioles. Finally, the bronchioles become tiny air sacs called alveoli.

In the alveoli, oxygen from the air is passed into your bloodstream and carried to all the cells in your body. The cells need oxygen to live and carry out everyday functions. During cell activity, carbon dioxide is made. But as it is a waste gas your body must get rid of it. It does this by moving it from your bloodstream into the alveoli. When you breathe out, your lungs force carbon dioxide out.

What is lung cancer?

When cancer occurs, the cells in your lung change and start to grow out of control. Many lung cancers start in the cells lining the bronchi and are called carcinomas of the bronchus or bronchogenic carcinomas. These cells increase to form a tumour. This tumour may then cause a blockage in your lung or the blood vessels in your mediastinum. As a result, it may cause breathing problems or swelling of your face and arms.

When the tumour is malignant, cells may break away from it and spread to other parts of your body. See page 16 for more about the types of lung cancer.

How common is lung cancer?

About 2,200 cases of lung cancer are diagnosed in Ireland each year. It the third most common cancer in men and women, excluding non-melanoma skin cancer.

Lung cancer usually affects people over the age of 40. The average age of diagnosis is about 70 years. For many years it was more common in men than in women. However, recently as more women have started smoking, the number of women developing the disease has increased greatly.
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What causes lung cancer?

The causes of lung cancer include:
- Smoking
- Chemicals such as asbestos, uranium and nickel
- Radon gas
- Family history

**Smoking:** Cigarette smoking causes most lung cancers. The risk of developing it increases with the number of cigarettes you smoke and smoking from a young age.

Low tar cigarettes do not reduce your risk as these kinds of smokers inhale more deeply. Inhaling other people’s cigarette smoke, known as passive smoking, increases the risk of lung disease and cancer too. But the risk is still much less than if you smoke yourself. Those who smoke pipes and cigars have a lower risk of lung cancer than cigarette smokers, but they are at a much greater risk than non-smokers.

**Chemicals:** If you are exposed to certain chemicals in your workplace or elsewhere, in rare cases it might lead to cancer. These chemicals include asbestos, uranium, metal dust and fumes, nickel, paints, diesel exhaust, nitrogen oxides, etc. These risks are higher if you smoke as well. Air pollution may be a cause in some countries where it is particularly bad. Research studies are looking at this problem at present.

**Radon gas:** Radon is a radioactive gas found naturally in the soil. It leaves the soil and rises into the air, sometimes through cracks and holes in the foundation of your house. Radon is harmless when it escapes into the air and is diluted. But if your home traps it inside, it can build up and cause harm. At high concentrations, it may increase your risk of developing lung cancer. Because it is colourless, odourless and tasteless, it can only be measured using special equipment.

**Family history:** Some research has been done on lung cancer and family history. It is believed that at least one faulty lung cancer gene can be passed down in families (inherited). If you have a parent, brother or sister with lung cancer, your risk of lung cancer is doubled.

How can I reduce my risk of lung cancer?

- **Quit smoking:** As soon as you stop smoking, your risk of lung cancer starts to go down. If you would like support and advice about quitting smoking, there is help available. See page 43 for more information.
- **Get your house checked for radon gas:** If you are worried about radon, you can have your house checked by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) or commercial companies. Steps can be taken to reduce your risk. See page 71 for RPII contact details.

If you feel you could be at risk of lung cancer, visit your family doctor and talk about your concerns. He or she will advise you what to do.

How can I reduce my risk of cancer in general?

- Don’t smoke.
- Limit your intake of alcohol.
- Be sunsmart every day to reduce your risk of skin cancer.
- Eat fresh fruit, vegetables and foods high in fibre.
- Limit fatty foods in your diet.
What are the symptoms of lung cancer?

The symptoms of lung cancer may include any of the following:
- A cough that doesn’t go away
- A change in a cough you have had for some time
- A chest infection slow to clear up, even after antibiotics
- Repeated bouts of pneumonia or bronchitis
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Hoarseness or a changing voice
- Coughing up blood
- Chest or shoulder discomfort – a dull ache or sharp pain when you cough or take a deep breath
- Difficulty swallowing
- Poor appetite and unexplained weight loss
- Feeling tired all the time
- Swelling in your face or neck

It is important to remember that these symptoms can happen in conditions other than cancer too. If you have any of the above symptoms, do get them checked out by your doctor.

How is lung cancer diagnosed?

Usually most people visit their family doctor (GP) first. If your doctor has concerns about you, he or she will refer you to a hospital for further tests. At the hospital the specialist will ask you questions about your general health and symptoms before examining you. Some or all of the following tests may be done to diagnose lung cancer:
- Chest X-ray
- Bronchoscopy
- Lung biopsy
- CT scan

Chest X-ray: A chest X-ray will be done to check the state of your lungs. If anything looks abnormal on the X-ray, your doctor can arrange more tests.

Bronchoscopy: During this test your doctor can look inside your lung airways with special equipment. A thin flexible tube called a bronchoscope is used. A light at one end of the tube helps your doctor to see any abnormal areas or swelling. The tube is like a small telescope that can take pictures like a camera. The test is usually done under local anaesthetic, which means you will be awake during it but your throat will be numbed. Depending on your situation, you may get a general anaesthetic. In this case, you will not be awake during the test and may have to stay in hospital overnight.

Before a bronchoscopy
Before the test you must not eat or drink anything for a few hours. It is natural to feel a little anxious beforehand so you may be given a mild sedative. This will help you to relax and ease any discomfort during the test.

During the test
The test may be a bit uncomfortable but does not last long – about 10 minutes. Local anaesthetic will be sprayed onto the back of your throat once you are relaxed. Next the tube is gently passed through your nose or mouth and into your lung airways. By looking through the tube, your doctor can check for anything that looks abnormal. Photos and samples of lung tissue (biopsy) can be taken at the same time and examined under a microscope. A biopsy result may be positive or negative for cancer. A negative result does not always mean there is no cancer and further tests may be needed.

After the test
Once the test is over, it will be at least 1 hour before you can eat or drink again. Because your throat will be numb it will not be safe to eat food or drink. Once the sedation has worn off, you can go home. It is best to arrange for someone to take you home, as you will be feeling sleepy. You will also be advised not to drive for 24 hours. After the test you might have a mild sore throat, but it should be gone after a couple of days.
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Lung biopsy: There are a number of ways to get lung tissue samples or biopsies. These can involve closed methods such as bronchoscopy or CT scan. A lung biopsy using a CT scan test is usually done in an operating theatre. This is called a percutaneous needle biopsy. Using CT allows your doctor to accurately pinpoint the area to be biopsied. A local anaesthetic is used on your skin to numb the area first. The radiologist will then ask you to hold your breath while a thin needle is passed through your skin into your lung. A sample of cells is then taken so they can be examined under a microscope. This test can be slightly uncomfortable but only lasts 5–10 minutes.

In rare cases, your chest may need to be opened up to get a biopsy. This is done in theatre under general anaesthetic.

CT scan: This scan is called computerised tomography. It is a special type of X-ray that builds up a detailed picture of the tissues inside your body. It is useful for finding lung tumours and can also see if the cancer is found only in your lung or not.

For some CT scans you may be asked not to eat or drink for 4 hours beforehand. For others, you may be given a special drink or injection which helps show up parts of your body on the scan. It is important to let the radiographer know if you are allergic to iodine or have asthma before you take the drink or injection. The injection might make you feel hot all over for a few minutes.

Preparation for a CT scan can vary between hospitals. But your doctor or nurse will tell you what to do. The scan itself does not hurt. This test is usually done as an outpatient.

As well as having a CT scan of your lungs, your doctor may decide to do a CT scan of your brain too. Some types of lung cancer can spread to the brain.

Tests to stage cancer

If the tests show that you have lung cancer, your doctor may want to do other tests. These extra tests will show if the disease has spread to other tissues and organs. This is called staging. It will also help your doctors to decide the best treatment for you. Further tests may include:

- PET scan
- MRI scan
- Ultrasound of liver and upper abdomen
- Bone scan
- Lung function tests
- Blood tests
- Mediastinoscopy

PET scan: This is a positron emission tomography scan. PET uses a low dose of radioactive sugar to measure activity in your cells. The sugar is first injected into a vein in your arm and travels to all the cells in your body. Because cancer cells absorb large amounts of the sugar, there will be more radioactivity where the cancer cells are found. After 1 hour, the scan is taken and can show if the cancer has spread to other tissues and organs.

Before the test you may have to fast for a few hours. The scan itself may take up to 1 hour. You will be given instructions beforehand. PET is safe to use and there are no side-effects. Because it is a fairly new type of scanning, it may not be available in all hospitals.

MRI scan: This is a magnetic resonance imaging scan. It is a special scan that uses magnetic energy to build up a picture of the tissues inside your body. It can tell if a cancer has spread beyond your lung.

An MRI scan takes longer than an X-ray, anything from 20 minutes to 1 hour. It does not hurt, but you may feel a bit uncomfortable while the pictures are being taken. It is also noisy but you will be given earplugs to wear during it. You might have an injection before the scan to highlight certain areas of your body.
To sum up

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You cannot wear metal jewellery during the scan and patients who have certain medical devices implanted, like pacemakers, are not usually suitable for the test. Your doctor will advise you on this. Most people can go home afterwards.

Ultrasound of liver and upper abdomen: This scan is carried out in the X-ray department of the hospital. A picture is built up of the tissues in your liver and upper abdomen using sound waves. You will be asked to lie on your back and a gel will be spread over the area to be scanned. A small device like a microphone, which makes sound waves, is used to take the scan. The sound waves then appear as pictures on a computer screen. This test is painless and only takes about 10 minutes.

Bone scan: Bone scans are very sensitive to any changes in the bone. They can find cancer cells before they even show up on an X-ray. For this test a tiny amount of a radioactive substance is injected into a vein, usually in your arm. After the injection, you will have to wait for up to 3 hours before the scan can be taken. It can help to pass the time by having a newspaper or magazine to read or a friend to keep you company.

The scan is taken of all the bones in your body. Abnormal bone absorbs more of the radioactive substance than normal bone. This can show up on the scan as areas of activity known as ‘hot spots’. The amount of radioactivity used is so small it is harmless. That said, it is best to avoid close contact with small children and pregnant women for 24 hours afterwards. Usually the radioactivity disappears from your body within a few hours.

Lung function tests: Your doctor will organise a range of breathing tests to see how well your lungs are working. This is important if he or she decides to remove the tumour by surgery or give you radiotherapy later.

Blood tests: You usually will have some blood tests taken as well. For example, a full blood count will tell if your blood has the right number of blood cell types. This test will be done often if you are later treated with chemotherapy. These drugs can affect your bone marrow where your blood cells are made. Other blood tests can spot problems in different organs such as your liver and bones.

Mediastinoscopy: The mediastinum is the area in the middle of your chest containing your heart, large blood vessels and oesophagus. A mediastinoscopy allows your doctor to examine the area and the lymph nodes found there. It is done under general anaesthetic so you will need to stay overnight in hospital. Before the test you cannot eat or drink for a few hours.

First, a small cut is made through the skin in your neck just above your breastbone. A thin flexible tube, like a small telescope, is passed into your chest. Your doctor can then look at the tissues and organs in your mediastinum. He or she may also take samples of lung tissue and lymph nodes to view them under a microscope. This test takes about 20–30 minutes to do. You cannot eat or drink anything for at least 4 hours after the test. You should be able to go home the next day.

Waiting for results

In general it will take about a week or so for all the test results to come back. Naturally, this can be anxious time for you. It may help to talk things over with the lung cancer nurse or a relative or close friend. You may also wish to call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 and speak to one of our specially trained nurses or visit a Daffodil Centre.

To sum up

There are several tests that can be done to diagnose lung cancer. These include:
- Chest X-ray
- Bronchoscopy
- Biopsy of lung tissues
- CT scan
- PET scan
- MRI scan
- Ultrasound scan
- Blood tests
- Lung function tests (breathing tests)
- Bone scan / brain scan
- Mediastinoscopy

Depending on the results of these tests, you may need to have one or more of the following:
- Lung function tests (breathing tests)
What are the types of lung cancer?

Lung cancers can be either primary or secondary. Primary is when the tumour starts to grow in the lungs first. Secondary is when it has spread from somewhere else to your lungs. Only primary lung cancer is discussed in this booklet.

The different types of lung cancer are recognised by looking at them under a microscope. Most lung cancers are divided into two main types: non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer. The two types behave in different ways and have their own special treatment needs.

Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)

Most lung cancers are of the non-small cell type. There are three main types of this cancer:

1. **Squamous cell carcinoma:** These kinds of cells are found in the airways of your lung. This type of cancer does not spread quickly.

2. **Adenocarcinoma:** These cells are usually found at the edges of your lung where mucus is made.

3. **Large cell carcinoma:** These are large round cells that may appear in any part of your lung, and tend to spread quickly.

The cells in these subtypes can also differ in size, shape and chemical make-up.

Small cell lung cancer (SCLC)

About 1 in 7 of all lung cancers is the small cell type. These cancers have small round cells that tend to grow quickly. They usually form large tumours and often spread to lymph nodes and other organs such as your bones, brain, adrenal glands and liver. This type of cancer often starts in the bronchi near the centre of your chest. It is usually due to smoking. In fact, it is very rare for someone who has never smoked to have small cell lung cancer. Another name for this type of cancer is oat cell.

Small cell lung cancer is briefly discussed in this booklet. See page 20 for its treatment. You can also contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre if you have any queries or concerns that this booklet does not answer.

Other types of cancer affecting the lungs

A rare type of cancer that affects the lungs is mesothelioma. This is a cancer of the cells in the protective lining that cover your lungs, known as the pleura. Usually it happens when someone is exposed to asbestos. This type of cancer is not discussed in this booklet. For more information, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the factsheet *Mesothelioma and Asbestos* or download it from [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie).

What are the stages of lung cancer?

Staging means finding out how far the cancer has spread. It is important because your doctor will need this information when deciding on your treatment. There are different staging systems for both small cell and non-small cell lung cancer.

In non-small cell lung cancer, the stages are 1 to 4. Some stages are further divided into A and B. In general, the lower the number, the less the cancer has spread. A higher number, such as stage 4, means a more serious cancer.

If the cancer has spread to distant parts of your body, it is known as secondary cancer or metastatic cancer.
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Treatment and side-effects

How is lung cancer treated?

Non-small cell lung cancer

The main types of treatment for non-small cell lung cancer are:
1. Surgery
2. Radiotherapy
3. Chemotherapy
4. Biological therapies (targeted therapies)

These treatments may be used on their own or with each other. The treatment you are advised to have will depend on:
- The type and size of the tumour
- Where it is in your lung
- If it has spread or not
- Your general state of health

Surgery: If the non-small cell lung cancer is found in one lung only – or in one lung with only lymph nodes close to the tumour involved – it may be possible to remove all the tumour by surgery. See page 21 for more about surgery.

Radiotherapy: Radiotherapy can be used on its own or with other therapies to treat non-small cell lung cancer. It can also be used to treat difficult symptoms such as breathlessness or pain. Also, advanced radiotherapy treatments might be given to treat non-small cell lung cancer instead of surgery. See page 25 for more about radiotherapy.

Chemotherapy: Sometimes if the cancer has spread to other parts of your body, radiotherapy and chemotherapy may be used together. See page 30 for more about chemotherapy.

Biological therapies: These are a newer group of drugs that use substances usually found naturally in your body to fight cancer, for example, antibodies. The type used for lung cancer is called targeted therapies. They usually work by blocking the signals that tell cancer cells to grow and divide. See page 35 for more details.
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Second opinion: You may find it reassuring to have a second medical opinion before deciding on treatment. Your doctor can refer you to another specialist for a second opinion if you feel it would help.

Individual treatment: Sometimes you may notice that other people with lung cancer are not getting the same treatment as you. With lung cancer, no two patients are the same. Their cancer may be a different type or at a different stage than yours. Treatment needs can vary.

Laser therapy
Lasers can be used to remove a lung tumour blocking your airway. This does not cure the cancer but relieves symptoms like breathing difficulties, infection or a collapsed lung. See page 36 for more details.

Surgery
The aim of surgery is to remove the part of your lung containing the tumour. Before a final decision on surgery is made, breathing tests that measure how well your lungs work will be done. Your doctor can then measure any increased shortness of breath after your surgery. Sometimes patients worry they will be unable to breathe properly after surgery because part of their lung will be removed. But there is no need for fear. You will still be able to breathe with just one lung.

The following factors will help your doctor to decide if you are suitable for surgery:
- Your type of tumour
- The size of tumour
- Where it is found in your lung
- If it has spread to other tissues
- The results of your breathing tests
- Your general health

Types of surgery
The type of surgery you have will depend on the size and location of the tumour. There are three types of surgery available:

1. Wedge resection: In this case, a small section of a lobe of your lung is removed.
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2 Lobectomy: This is when a lobe of your lung is removed.
3 Pneumonectomy: Here an entire lung is removed.

During surgery, your surgeon will usually remove lymph glands or lymph nodes near the tumour, as they are usually the first places where the cancer may spread.

Getting ready for surgery
To make sure you are fit for surgery some extra tests may be done. These may include a heart test (ECG) and some more blood tests. A physiotherapist will show you how to do deep breathing and leg exercises, as these will help prevent you getting a chest infection or blood clot in your leg afterwards. You will not be allowed to eat anything from the midnight before surgery. You may be given an injection of heparin to prevent a clot developing in your legs after surgery. Before you go to theatre your nurse may give you medication to make you feel more relaxed and sleepy.

After surgery
Once you return to the ward, a close eye will be kept on you. When you wake up, you will notice a number of tubes attached to your body. They may look alarming but they are normal after an operation like this.
- There will be two plastic tubes (chest drains) near your wound site. These are to help your lung re-expand and drain away fluid from your wound site.
- A drip will be put into a vein in your arm. Through this you will be given fluids until you can drink again.
- You will be wearing an oxygen mask or nasal oxygen prongs. These will give you extra oxygen to help you breathe.
- A small thin tube called a catheter may be put into your bladder and urine drained off into a drainage bag. This will save you having to get out of bed to go to the toilet.
- There may be a tiny tube, called an epidural catheter, in your back to help with pain relief.

All of these tubes and drains will be taken out as you get better. You will have regular chest X-rays to make sure your lungs are working properly.

Side-effects of surgery

Common side-effects:
- Pain and feeling sick
- Reduced mobility
- Weakness
- Reduced bowel movements
- Shortness of breath

Pain and feeling sick: It is common to have some pain after surgery for lung cancer. Some patients also feel sick. Your nurse can give you painkilling injections or suppositories and medicine to prevent you feeling or getting sick if you need it. Always ask for help before the pain or sickness gets bad. If the injections do not work, let your nurse know as they can be changed. You may have mild discomfort or pain in your chest for some weeks or even months. But your doctor will give you a prescription for painkillers to take home with you if you still need them.

Reduced bowel movements: The anaesthetic used during your operation slows down the movement of your bowel. As a result, it takes a few days before you can return to eating and drinking. You will quickly be able to take sips of water again. The amount of fluids you can take will then be increased. Most people can manage a light meal within 1 or 2 days of surgery. As soon as you begin to drink again, the drip will be removed.

Reduced mobility: A physiotherapist will visit you every day to help you with your breathing exercises. He or she will also show you how to cough and turn in the bed. By doing these exercises, you will help to re-expand the remaining lung tissue and get rid of excess fluid and air in your lung.

Even when you are in bed, you will be encouraged to move your legs and do your deep breathing exercises at least once an hour. On the day after surgery, the nurses will help you get out of bed and take you for a short walk. These walks will become more frequent and longer as you get better. Soon you will be able to go for walks on your own.

Weakness: Surgery for lung cancer is a major operation. It may take weeks or even months to get back your old strength. At first, you may be unable to do all that you would like to do, but this will gradually improve. The recovery period can vary from patient to patient.
Radiotherapy

This is a treatment where high-energy rays are aimed at a cancer to cure or shrink it. In most types of lung cancer the rays come from a machine called a linear accelerator or cobalt machine. This is called external beam radiotherapy.

Planning your treatment

Before radiotherapy, your doctor and other specialists plan how best to give your treatment. They work out how to give you the right amount of treatment for the cancer with the least damage to normal cells.

On your first visit to the radiotherapy department you may be asked to lie under a machine called a simulator. This machine takes X-rays of the area to be treated. Sometimes a CT scanner can be used as well. Treatment planning is a very important part of radiotherapy and it may take a few visits before your treatment can go ahead.

Your skin will be marked to outline where you are to get treatment. This is usually done with a permanent tattoo. That way the rays can be aimed at the same area to be treated each day. Before starting radiotherapy, you will be told how to look after your skin during and after treatment.

How much radiotherapy do I need?

How much treatment you need will depend on the type and size of the tumour. Your course of treatment may last for several weeks. If radiotherapy is given to control symptoms, like pain or bleeding, it is known as palliative radiotherapy. Only one or two treatments are given in this case. Your doctor will discuss with you how many treatments you need.

Shortness of breath: Some patients may feel short of breath because they have less lung tissue to supply their body with oxygen. Usually, this gets better as the lung tissue re-expands and heals after surgery. See page 37 for more information.

Going home

Most people are ready to go home 7–10 days after surgery. If you live alone or have problems getting around the house, talk to your nurse or medical social worker on your ward as soon as you are admitted to the hospital. That way he or she can help put in place any community services that you may need after you leave hospital.

On the day you go home, you will be given a date to come back for a check-up, usually in about 4–6 weeks’ time. If you have a worry or symptom before your check-up date, contact your doctor, cancer nurse specialist or hospital ward for advice.

The muscles of your chest and the arm of the affected side may become weak too. The physiotherapist will show you special exercises to help rebuild muscle strength. You will help to speed up your recovery if you spend a short time each day doing the exercises at home.

To sum up

- The aim of surgery is to remove the part of your lung containing the tumour.
- Surgery is of benefit when the tumour is found in one area of your lung and there are little or no lymph nodes affected.
- The types of surgery include a wedge resection, lobectomy or pneumonectomy.
- The side-effects of surgery can include pain and feeling sick, reduced bowel movements, reduced mobility, weakness and shortness of breath. But not all patients will get these problems.
- Regular breathing exercises will build muscle strength in your lung after surgery.
- Most people are ready to go home 7–10 days after surgery.
Understanding cancer of the lung

Planning your treatment: The specialist uses a CT or MRI scanner to work out how to shape the radiotherapy beam so it fits your tumour exactly. It is very important that you stay still during your treatment. To help you do this, the radiation technician will cover you with a plastic sheet full of air, like a sleeping bag. The air will then be vacuumed out so that the sheet makes a mould around your body. Each time you receive your treatment, you will be put in this mould.

Having your treatment: You will have to go to the hospital a number of times for treatment. The treatment itself does not take very long. But it will take a little while to get you into the right position in your mould. The radiation comes from a linear accelerator. This is the same type of machine used for regular external beam radiotherapy.

For more information on stereotactic radiotherapy and other types of advanced radiotherapy treatments, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the factsheet, Advanced Radiotherapy Treatments, or download it from www.cancer.ie

Internal radiotherapy

Sometimes a special type of internal radiotherapy called endobronchial radiotherapy or brachytherapy can help. This is when a source of radiation is put close to or inside the tumour. It may be given if the tumour is blocking one of your airways, causing your lung to collapse, or if you find it hard to breathe.

First, a thin tube called an applicator is put inside your lung for a short while using a bronchoscope. The tube is then linked to another tube that is attached to a machine. When the machine is switched on, it causes the source of radiation to pass inside the tube in your lung. This way of opening up the airway is often done in one session.

Will I have any side-effects?

Any side-effects you get will depend on which part of your body is being treated and the number of treatments you get. Side-effects can vary from person to person too.
Common side-effects:

- Difficulty swallowing or sore throat
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- Weight loss
- Skin changes
- Shortness of breath
- Hair loss (alopecia)
- Feeling very tired

Difficulty swallowing or sore throat: After a week or two of treatment you might find that your chest feels tight. Or you might find it hard to swallow. It may feel as if you have a lump in your throat all the time. Your throat may feel dry and sore as well. If this happens, it can help to eat soft foods.

But if it is hard for you to eat your normal foods, high-calorie drinks may help. These are usually easier to swallow. A dietician may also be involved in your care and will give you advice. Your doctor can give you medication to take before meals to make swallowing easier. The discomfort will usually get better in about 5–8 weeks.

Feeling sick or vomiting: If you are feeling sick or vomiting, your nurse can give you medication to help prevent it. Take them 1 hour before treatment. It also helps to eat small amounts often.

Weight loss: If you have problems eating, you may begin to lose weight. It is best to eat as well as you can while on treatment. Ask to see a dietician if you are losing weight. He or she will give you advice on the best foods to eat. It is important to keep your weight, as it may take longer to get better if you lose weight. For more information, contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the booklet, Diet and Cancer, or download it from www.cancer.ie

Skin changes: During radiotherapy, the skin in the treated area may become red and sore. It can look a little like sunburn. If this happens, a cream can be used to treat it. Only use creams recommended by your nurses or radiation therapists. If you need to wash the area, use warm water and pat it dry with a soft towel. Do not rub the skin while washing and drying. Also avoid perfumed creams or powders. Check with your radiation therapist or nurse before putting anything on your skin.

Feeling very tired: Feeling tired can build up over the course of your treatment. This may be due to the treatment itself or perhaps you have to travel long distances for treatment. Rest as much as you can. Also, cut down on the things you normally do while you are on treatment. See page 41 for more details about fatigue.

>>> Rest as much as you can while on treatment.

Shortness of breath: After radiotherapy to your chest, you may notice that you get a dry cough and shortness of breath. Radiotherapy can affect how your lungs supply oxygen to your body. This condition is known as radiation fibrosis. It can happen several months after treatment has ended. Do tell your doctor as soon as possible if you develop these symptoms. You may need treatment with medication. For more information on breathlessness, contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the factsheet, Breathlessness and Cancer, or download it from www.cancer.ie

Hair loss (alopecia): Hair loss will happen if you have radiation to any part of your body where there is hair. If you have radiotherapy to your head, hair loss may occur in the part of your head being treated but usually it is the complete head. If this happens, your hair will fall out quickly. But try not to worry, as it will start to grow again when treatment is over. For some patients who have radiotherapy to the brain, their full hair may not grow back.

It is natural to feel upset at the thought of losing your hair. Talk to your nurse or medical social worker about your feelings. He or she will help you to find ways to cope with hair loss. You can get a wig or hairpiece or you may prefer to wear a hat, scarf or turban. In some hospitals the nurse or medical social worker may be able to arrange this for you. If your hospital does not have a medical social worker, ask if they have the name of a wig fitter you could visit. Your local hairdresser may also be able to help. In some cases, it is possible to get financial assistance...
Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is a treatment using drugs that cure or control cancer. These drugs can be used on their own or with each other. Most patients with lung cancer who need chemotherapy will get a combination of two or three drugs. The decision to give you chemotherapy or not will depend on the type and size of the tumour, and if the cancer has spread to other parts of your body. Chemotherapy can be given before or after radiotherapy or surgery.

How often do I need chemotherapy?
The drugs used in chemotherapy are carried in your bloodstream to almost every part of your body. Often they are given in cycles such as once every 3 weeks with a rest period between treatments. By having a rest period it gives your body a chance to recover from the effects of the drugs. The number of cycles can vary. It will depend on the type of cancer you have and how well it is responding to treatment.

How do I get chemotherapy?
Chemotherapy may be given directly into a vein as an injection or through an infusion (drip). Some drugs may also be given as tablets. Depending on the type of drugs you are getting, you may need to stay in hospital for 2 or 3 days. However, most treatments can now be given in day care.

What kinds of drugs are used?
There are many drugs used in the treatment of lung cancer. The ones most commonly used are carboplatin, ifosfamide, cyclophosphamide, etoposide, pemetrexed, adriamycin and cisplatin. Two or more of these drugs are often used in combination with each other. Other chemotherapy drugs can also be used. Some may be part of clinical trials and your doctor might ask if you would like to take part. See page 45 for more about clinical trials.

Before any chemotherapy is given your doctor will discuss your treatment options with you. More information about specific drugs can be found on the Irish Cancer Society website: www.cancer.ie. Other types of drugs called targeted therapies may be given with chemotherapy. See page 35 for more details.

What if cancer recurs or spreads beyond the lung?
Some people have no more problems after their first treatment for lung cancer. But for others the cancer does come back. It may also have spread to other parts of your body. In some cases, the cancer may be advanced when the diagnosis is made. Even if the cancer has gone beyond your lung or recurs, it can still be treated. Research is ongoing into new drugs that may be useful for patients whose lung cancer has recurred. Your doctor will tell you if these new drugs are suitable for you.

In many cases, chemotherapy will help you live longer with better control of your symptoms. But before deciding on treatment, your doctor will consider your general health and where the cancer has spread. He or she will also note the kinds of treatment you have had in the past.
Understanding cancer of the lung

What are the side-effects of chemotherapy?

The side-effects of chemotherapy vary from person to person and depend on the drugs used. These unwanted effects happen because chemotherapy not only affects cancer cells but normal cells too. But nowadays side-effects can be well controlled with medication.

Before you start your treatment ask your doctor about any possible side-effects that may occur. Do tell your doctor about the way you are feeling during your treatment as most side-effects can be eased with medication. In most cases, the side-effects go away when the treatment ends or soon after.

Common side-effects:

- Infection
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Sore mouth
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling very tired
- Hair loss (alopecia)

Infection: Chemotherapy can make you more likely to get infections. This happens because most chemotherapy drugs affect the bone marrow, which makes the white blood cells that fight infection. If you do not have enough white blood cells, even minor infections like a cold or sore throat could make you quite ill.

During treatment cycles you will have blood tests to make sure that you have enough white blood cells to fight infection. If your white blood count is low, your doctor will ask you to watch out for signs of infection. These signs could include feeling shivery and unwell or running a temperature of 38°C or higher. If this happens, tell your doctor straight away. He or she will tell you what to do. If you get a high temperature, you will need to have a blood test. Sometimes antibiotics are needed to treat the infection.

If you are feeling shivery and unwell or running a temperature of 38°C or higher, tell your hospital doctor or nurse straight away.

Sore mouth: Some drugs used to treat lung cancer can cause a sore mouth. They can also cause little ulcers to appear on your tongue, gums and inside the cheeks of your mouth. It helps to keep your teeth, gums and mouth very clean. If you have dentures, remove them if your gums are sore. There are also special mouthwashes that you can use. Your nurse will show you how to use them properly.

Loss of appetite: You may find that you lose your appetite. It is best to eat as much as you can while on chemotherapy to keep up your strength. Eat smaller amounts more often. If you do not feel like eating during treatment, you could replace some meals with special high-calorie drinks. Ask your nurse if you can speak to a dietitian about this. For a booklet called Diet and Cancer, contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download a copy from www.cancer.ie

Feeling very tired: It is not uncommon to feel very tired or fatigued. This tiredness can last for some weeks after treatment has ended. If this happens take things easier. Do less than you would normally do.
Understanding cancer of the lung

Biological therapies (targeted therapies)

Nowadays a newer group of drugs called biological therapies is available to treat lung cancer. There are many different types of biological therapies. Targeted therapies is the one most commonly used in lung cancer. They work by blocking the signals that tell cancer cells to grow and divide. The drugs only target the cancer cells and leave normal cells alone. This means you don’t get many of the side-effects seen in chemotherapy. Even so, targeted therapies can be used with radiotherapy or with chemotherapy as well.

There are many different types of targeted therapies. Some are known as growth inhibitors because they block the tumour from growing, directly and/or by preventing new blood vessels being made. This can cause the tumour to get smaller or prevent it getting bigger. Some types of growth inhibitors are also called monoclonal antibodies. These are antibodies (proteins) made in the laboratory that attach themselves to certain proteins on the surface of a particular cancer cell (receptors) and ‘lock’ onto them like a key in a lock. They then prevent the cancer cell growing. Doctors can now test tissue taken from your tumour to see if your lung cancer will respond to a particular targeted therapy. This is called mutation testing.

Examples of targeted therapies used in non-small cell lung cancer are erlotinib (Tarceva®), bevacizumab (Avastin®), cetuximab (Erbitux®) and gefitinib (Iressa®). See our website www.cancer.ie for more information about these drugs. Bevacizumab and cetuximab are usually given into a vein, while erlotinib and gefitinib are given in tablet form. Your doctor and nurse will let you know how often you will receive them.

Side-effects

Some people can have a small allergic reaction to monoclonal antibodies. To prevent this, the first dose is given slowly over a number of hours. You may be given medication before treatment starts to make this side-effect less likely. Some patients complain of a flu-like reaction and feeling very tired after treatment. These usually go away once treatment ends or soon after. Other side-effects include a
skin rash, diarrhoea, nausea and loss of appetite. Your doctor and nurse will explain this treatment to you in more detail and tell you about any likely side-effects.

To sum up
- Biological therapies use substances that usually occur naturally in your body to fight cancer.
- Targeted therapies is the type most commonly used in lung cancer. They work by blocking the signals that tell cancer cells to grow and divide.
- Unlike chemotherapy, biological therapies target cancer cells directly and do not harm normal cells.
- The drugs can be given by tablet or into a vein through a drip.
- Some side-effects include small allergic reaction, skin rash, diarrhoea, nausea and loss of appetite.

Laser therapy
In some cases lung cancer can block your windpipe (trachea) and cause breathing problems, infections or a collapsed lung. Or it can block one of the main airways that allows air into your lungs. If these happen, laser therapy can help. A laser is a very strong, tiny beam of light that is very hot and can cut the tumour like a surgical knife. It burns the tumour out of the airway and seals off blood vessels so there is little bleeding afterwards. It may not destroy the entire tumour, but it can relieve your symptoms.

First, you will be given a general anaesthetic in theatre. Once you are asleep, your doctor will put a tube called a bronchoscope down your throat and into your lungs. The laser tube then goes down inside the bronchoscope. The laser beam is turned on and the tumour causing the blockage is then burned away.

Laser therapy is very safe and most people have no side-effects. Usually you are allowed home the next day unless there has been an infection below the blockage. In this case, it may be relieved with antibiotics and physiotherapy.

If the tumour grows back, the laser therapy can be repeated. You can also have chemotherapy or radiotherapy to slow the growth of the tumour and give you relief.

Future treatments of lung cancer
New treatments for lung cancer are being developed all the time. These include: cryosurgery, diathermy, radiofrequency ablation and photodynamic therapy (PDT). They use freezing, an electric current, heat or light, respectively, to kill the cancer cells. Stenting is a treatment used more often nowadays if you have breathing problems caused by the tumour blocking or narrowing your lung airways. By placing a mesh tube into your airway, it can keep it open and relieve any breathing difficulties.

The above treatments are only available at specialised centres.

How can my symptoms be relieved?
Sometimes when you have cancer it can be very hard to know if the symptoms you are having are part of your illness or a side-effect of treatment. These symptoms can vary from time to time and be either mild or severe. If you have symptoms that are troubling you, it is important to let your doctor or nurse know. He or she may be able to give you treatment that will help. The five most common symptoms of lung cancer are:
- Shortness of breath (dyspnoea)
- Cough
- Fluid in the lungs
- Fatigue
- Pain

Shortness of breath (dyspnoea)
Shortness of breath can be very uncomfortable and distressing. You may find that it makes you feel anxious and stops you from doing things that you like to do. This symptom may be caused by your tumour or because of treatment. For example, you may have had part of your lung removed or you may have developed a chest infection while on chemotherapy. Whatever the reason, there are ways to make this symptom easier to cope with.
Understand cancer of the lung

Pleural effusion (fluid in lungs)
Fluid may build up between the linings of your lung. This is known as a pleural effusion and can cause you to feel short of breath. Your doctor may take a sample of this fluid using a small needle or may decide to drain the fluid. This can be done by putting a small tube into your chest under local anaesthetic. The tube can then be removed once all the fluid has drained.

Any shortness of breath is likely to get better after the fluid is drained. If the drainage has improved your symptoms and if the fluid starts to build up again, your doctor may decide to do a pleurodesis. This is where medication is put into your chest through the chest tube to cause the linings of your lung to stick together. This prevents fluid building up again. Or sometimes a tube known as a catheter may be put under your skin and threaded into the pleural effusion. This can be left there for the long term. A special vacuum bottle attached to the tube can then be used to drain the fluid as needed.

Cough
Cough is another common symptom of lung cancer. An irritating cough can really affect your quality of life. You may complain of not being able to sleep, shortness of breath and pain. It is important to find out the cause of the cough. The tumour, a chest infection or bronchitis may cause the cough. Treatment with radiotherapy or antibiotics may help.

Tips & Hints – shortness of breath
- Ask the physiotherapist or nurse to show you some breathing exercises that will help to strengthen your muscles used in breathing. Repeat the exercises regularly during the day. Only do as much as you feel comfortable with.
- The physiotherapist can also show you ways to sit that will increase the amount of air you can take into your body.
- You may find that you sleep better in a comfortable chair.
- Avoid doing things that increase your shortness of breath, such as bending over and climbing flights of stairs. Take your time getting dressed and wear clothes and shoes that are easy to put on.
- Make sure you have a calm atmosphere. Anxiety can make a breathing problem seem much worse, so a quiet setting can really help. Listen to relaxation tapes too.
- If you are anxious and upset, ask to speak to a counsellor about your feelings – it may help.

Tips & Hints – coughing
- Take plenty of fluids, such as water and fruit juice, if you are coughing up a lot of phlegm. This will loosen it and make it easier to cough up.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to recommend a good cough mixture.
- Tell your doctor if your cough is dry and irritating. You may not be coughing up any phlegm. He or she may give you medicine to reduce or stop the cough.
- Avoid situations that make your cough worse, such as a smoky atmosphere or sudden changes in temperature. Make sure you have fresh air wherever you are sitting. Open a window or use a fan to create a light breeze.

National Cancer Helpline Freephone 1800 200 700
Pain

For many patients with lung cancer, pain is one of the main symptoms that prompt them to go to their doctor in the first place. A lung tumour can cause mild or severe pain in your chest by pressing on nearby tissues and organs. Pain can also be caused by the tumour spreading to other parts of your body, such as your bones. Sometimes surgery for lung cancer can cause mild to severe pain for weeks or months afterwards. The pain may be constant or present only now and then.

Your doctor will try to find out what is causing the pain. Surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy can all help to ease pain. There are also a lot of good painkillers available today.

Your doctor will decide which painkiller is best suited to the type of pain you have. If the medication does not kill the pain, tell your doctor or nurse. A specialist who manages pain and other symptoms may also be able to help you. He or she can arrange for you to try out different painkillers to find out what suits you best. There are also other ways to treat pain, such as nerve blocks and epidural injections. If you need more information, ask your doctor or nurse. You can also contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the factsheet, Cancer Pain, or download it from www.cancer.ie

Fatigue

Fatigue is a common symptom of cancer and often described as an overwhelming tiredness. You may find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions. Not only can it be due to the cancer itself but also to treatments such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

The reason for the fatigue can be hard to identify. Fatigue might also be caused by anxiety when a diagnosis of cancer is made and the additional stress caused by treatment. It is important to know that even though you may find it hard to identify the reasons for your tiredness, there is action you can take to help.

There is a useful booklet called Coping with Fatigue available. For more information, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download it from www.cancer.ie
Should I quit smoking?

It is never too late to quit smoking. If you quit, it reduces your chance of the cancer coming back and another one developing. It also reduces your chance of developing other illnesses. These include emphysema, heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis. Smoking can also affect the treatment of cancer. For example:

- It can cause more pain after surgery.
- It can increase the risk of infection after surgery.
- It can lead to complications with the general anaesthetic.
- It can reduce how well chemotherapy or radiotherapy works.
- It can make the side-effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy worse. It can also cause rarer side-effects such as breathing and heart problems.

Quit smoking

There is help available if you smoke and would like to stop. The National Smokers’ Quitline offers support and assistance for smokers. You can talk to a specially trained stop smoking counsellor who will help you prepare a plan and support you during this time. Call the Quitline on 1850 201 203 (Monday to Saturday: 8am – 10pm) for more information. Some hospitals have stop-smoking clinics. Ask your doctor or nurse if there is one available in your hospital.

If a loved one has cancer and you smoke

Smoking can damage not only your own health but also of those around you. This can be a greater problem if your loved one has cancer. If you smoke around them, you are increasing their risk of the cancer returning or another one developing. This could cause them great worry and may even bring conflict. Try to support your loved one by not smoking in their company or consider giving it up.

Will treatment affect my sex life and fertility?

Sex and sexuality

Coming to terms with the fact that you have cancer can take quite a while. Your emotions will be turned upside down. It can be hard to relax too when you have a lot of worries on your mind. You may also be feeling tired and have breathing difficulties from the effects of treatment. As a result, you may lose interest in sex. This is quite normal when you are concerned about your health.

If you have a supportive partner, you may find that talking to them eases your anxiety. Even if you do not feel like having sex, you can still enjoy a close and loving relationship. You should not feel guilty or embarrassed to talk to your doctor about this matter if it is troubling you. He or she could refer you for specialist counselling if you thought that would be helpful.
There is no set time for you to be ready to have sex again. It varies from person to person. Once you return to your usual routine your interest in sex should return too. There is no reason why you cannot have sex when on chemotherapy or radiotherapy if you feel like it. But you may find it will be some weeks before you will feel well enough to have sex again after surgery. If you need further information talk to your doctor, who will answer your questions in more detail.

Pregnancy and contraception

If you are of child-bearing age, you should use a reliable method of contraception during treatment and for some time afterwards. This is because there is a risk of miscarriage or birth defects in children conceived during or just after treatment. Many doctors believe it is better for you or your partner not to get pregnant for 2 years after your chemotherapy ends. This time gives your body a chance to get over the effects of the cancer and its treatment.

Fertility

Surgery or radiotherapy for lung cancer do not affect your fertility. The side-effects of chemotherapy depend mainly on the drugs you receive and can vary from person to person. Sometimes your fertility can be affected by chemotherapy. You may not be able to have children in the future. Do discuss this side-effect with your doctor before treatment starts. It may be possible to store sperm or eggs at the HARI Unit in Dublin for use at a later date. See page 71 for contact details.

What follow-up do I need?

Whatever treatment you get for your cancer, once it is over you will need to come back for regular check-ups. This is known as follow-up. At first these visits will be quite often. They may include seeing your doctor and having tests such as X-rays, scans and blood tests. These check-ups will continue for a number of years but will then become less frequent.

If you are between check-ups or you have a symptom or problem that is worrying you, make an appointment to see your doctor as soon as possible.
Understanding cancer of the lung

Cancer and complementary therapies

There is great interest today in complementary treatments for cancer. Some people find them very helpful during their illness. In many countries the way cancer is treated depends on the culture and environment in which you live. In Ireland, cancer treatments are based on scientific research, which allows the response to treatment, side-effects and the general effect of treatment to be predicted.

You may hear about the following types of treatments or therapies.

Conventional therapies

Conventional therapies are treatments which doctors use most often to treat people with cancer. These include surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and biological therapies. They are tried and trusted methods where there is a long history of use. Many of the treatments have been tested in clinical trials.

Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies are treatments that are sometimes given together with conventional treatment. They include therapies such as:

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Gentle massage
- Hypnotherapy
- Meditation
- Music, art and dance therapy
- Nutrition therapy
- Reflexology
- Relaxation
- Shiatsu
- Visualisation
- Yoga

Many people find that complementary therapies are very helpful in a number of ways. You may feel more relaxed and positive about yourself and your illness. You may be better able to cope with the physical side-effects of cancer and the distressing emotions that cancer can often bring. Some complementary therapies also focus on the spiritual dimension of a person to aid healing.

If you decide to have complementary or alternative treatments...

Before you decide to change your treatment or add any methods of your own, be sure to talk to your doctor or nurse. Some methods can be safely used along with standard medical treatment. But others can interfere with standard treatment or cause serious side-effects. For that reason, it is important to talk openly with your GP or cancer specialist if you are thinking of having treatment with either a complementary or alternative practitioner. Don't be afraid that your doctor will be offended by your wish for other treatments. In fact, he or she may be able to recommend therapies that could be safe and useful for you.

Be cautious in selecting a practitioner. Don't be misled by promises of cures. At present, this area is not fully regulated in Ireland. Ensure that the practitioners you plan to visit are properly qualified and have a good reputation. Check to see if they belong to a professional body or not. If you are unsure but would like to know what other patients have found helpful, contact your doctor or a patient support group. Also, it is important to make sure that the practitioner is charging a fair price for your treatment.

More information is available in a free booklet from the Irish Cancer Society called Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies. For a copy, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download it from www.cancer.ie

National Cancer Helpline Freefone 1800 200 700
Coping and emotions

How can I cope with my feelings?

There are many reactions when told you have lung cancer. Reactions can often differ from person to person. In fact, there is no right or wrong way to feel. There is also no set time to have one particular emotion or not. Some reactions may occur at the time of diagnosis, while others might appear or reappear later during your treatment. Or indeed it may not be until you recover from your illness that your emotions hit hard.

Sometimes a cancer diagnosis can bring greater distress and cause anxiety and depression. A helpful booklet that discusses them in detail is called Understanding the Emotional Effects of Cancer. For a copy, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download it from www.cancer.ie

Shock and disbelief

‘It can’t be me. ‘Has there been a mistake?’ ‘Cancer happens to other people, not me.’

Shock is often the first reaction to a cancer diagnosis. In fact, you may feel numb and the situation may seem unreal. Many people think cancer will never happen to them and are totally shocked when it does. Even if your doctor and nurse discuss your cancer with you, the news may not sink in for a while. You may find yourself confused, asking the same questions over and over again. Or else you may accept the news calmly and say nothing because you cannot really believe what is happening to you.

Common reactions include:

- Shock and disbelief
- Fear and uncertainty
- Loss of control
- Sorrow and sadness
- Denial
- Anger
- Resentment
- Blame and guilt
- Withdrawal and isolation

Withdrawing and isolation

It’s often the first reaction to a cancer diagnosis. In fact, you may feel numb and the situation may seem unreal. Many people think cancer will never happen to them and are totally shocked when it does. Even if your doctor and nurse discuss your cancer with you, the news may not sink in for a while. You may find yourself confused, asking the same questions over and over again. Or else you may accept the news calmly and say nothing because you cannot really believe what is happening to you.
Understanding cancer of the lung

But it takes a while to know what is within your control and what is beyond it. Finding out as much as possible about your illness can help you regain some control. Taking an active part in making decisions about your treatment can help you feel more in control of your illness.

There is no doubt that cancer is a scary word. Not surprisingly, you may have many fears when first told of your diagnosis. Often the first thing people think about is dying. They think the worst. But nowadays many cancers can be cured or controlled with modern treatments.

Another great fear about cancer is pain. The fear of pain can sometimes overwhelm everything else. However, some cancers cause no physical pain at all or else can be controlled with good painkillers. You may also have fears that your experience of cancer will change who you are and that people will reject or avoid you. For example, after some cancer treatments your body image may be different, and it will take some time for you and for others to adjust to your new look.

You may also have practical worries and fears about the effect of your illness on your family, your finances, your job, and your lifestyle.

It is natural for you to be afraid or concerned about the future too. You may wonder if you will be cured or if your cancer will recur. Living with this uncertainty can make you feel anxious and fearful. You may not wish to make any plans or decisions. Discuss your concerns with your doctor, who will give you advice and help. If living with uncertainty overwhelms you, it may help to talk to someone in a support group.

After a cancer diagnosis, it is common for people to feel their life is beyond their control. All your plans may be put on hold. You may even lose some independence and freedom. Because you don’t know enough about your illness at first, you may rely totally on the advice of your doctors and nurses. You may not feel confident to make any decisions about your treatment. When you experience a loss of control, it can lead to feelings of helplessness. You may also feel that you will be unable to cope with your treatment or that you will ‘fall to pieces’ or ‘go crazy’. You may even lose hope.

It is natural to feel sad when told you have cancer. You may feel sad for a variety of reasons: for the loss of your good health, for the plans that are put on hold, for the people you feel you’ve let down, and for any changes to your body that arise from treatment. Depending on your type of cancer, your fertility or body image may be affected by treatment. In this case, the sadness or sorrow can come from feeling as if a part of you has died. These feelings may not be there all the time and may come and go, but will gradually fade.

Sometimes after being told their diagnosis, people deny they have cancer. While this may seem unusual, it is a valid way of coping. As a result, you may not wish to mention or discuss your illness. Or else you may talk as if your illness is nothing serious. Denial may last for some time, depending on how long it takes you to adjust to your illness. Tell your family and close friends that you would prefer not to talk about your illness, at least for the time being. Your doctors and nurses will also understand if you don’t want to hear any information about your cancer until you’re ready.

Learning more about your illness and treatment can help you feel more in control.
Blame and guilt

When diagnosed with a serious illness such as cancer, it is natural to want to know what caused it. Sometimes people blame themselves or others for their illness. As cancer experts rarely know exactly what has caused cancer, there is no good in blaming yourself. Other times, people feel guilty because they delayed going to the doctor with their symptoms, fearing the worst.

No matter what the reason, don’t torture yourself at this time. Don’t feel guilty if you can’t keep a positive attitude either, especially when you feel unwell. Low periods are to be expected. There is no evidence that your attitude will affect your health or cancer. Regret and guilt serves no useful purpose. Instead focus on what you can change or do to make you feel more in control of your illness.

Withdrawal and isolation

It is true that a cancer diagnosis is stressful. It can leave you feeling confused and overwhelmed with so much information to take in. At times during your illness you may want to be left alone and withdraw from people. It is normal for you to want to be alone to sort out your thoughts and feelings. You will want to take stock of things and work out how best you can cope. However, it is not a good idea to spend long hours on your own every day.

Sometimes depression can make you avoid family and friends and stop you wanting to talk. If you isolate yourself, it can be hard for your family and friends, as they will want to share this difficult time with you. They may worry about you needlessly. Let your family and friends know that you will talk to them once you are ready.

If you would like more information on how to talk about your cancer, there is a useful booklet available called Who Can Ever Understand? Talking about Your Cancer. If you would like a copy, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700, visit a Daffodil Centre or download it from www.cancer.ie

Anger

It is normal too to be very upset when told you have cancer. Many aspects of your illness can result in anger and distress. Anger can often hide other feelings such as fear, sadness or frustration. You may feel angry towards the doctors and nurses who are caring for you.

Or if you have a religious belief, you may feel angry with God for allowing cancer to occur. You may vent your anger on those closest to you. Indeed being unable to protect the ones you love may frustrate you.

Your family and friends may not always be aware that your anger is really at your illness and not at them. It may be helpful to talk to them when you are calm, rather than feeling guilty or trying to bottle up your angry thoughts. Anger can sometimes affect your ability to think clearly. So if it persists and you are finding it hard to talk to your family, tell your nurse or doctor.

Resentment

It is natural that you might be resentful and unhappy because you have cancer, while other people are well. During the course of your illness, similar feelings of resentment may occur for many reasons.

You may resent that another patient receiving the same treatment as you has responded quicker than you have. You may resent having to change your lifestyle in some way. Sometimes relatives, especially adolescents, can resent the changes that your illness makes to their lives. It is best to admit that these feelings of resentment exist and to express them. Bottling up resentment helps no one. Instead everyone ends up feeling angry and guilty.

‘Why me? I always took care of my health. ‘Why did this happen now?’

‘How can you talk, you don’t have to deal with cancer.’ ‘How come I’m not getting better?’

‘I just need to be on my own.’

‘I should never have started smoking.’

Don’t bottle up your feelings – express them.
Understanding cancer of the lung

How can I talk to my children?

A cancer diagnosis can affect an entire family. It can bring changes that may be either great or small. Even so, it is best to keep family life as normal as possible. Continue with school and other activities, with birthdays and celebrations or work commitments. It may take a while but families can learn to adjust to changes in their lives.

Positive emotions

A cancer experience can also bring positive emotions. However, it may be some time before you are ready to accept these emotions as positive. You may experience great love, affection and closeness by those around you, not only family and friends but also neighbours and even the healthcare team. With that can come a sense of gratitude too. The experience of cancer can also bring personal growth and knowledge – it can make you realise where your strength lies and what is important in life for you. You may also get the chance to do and enjoy different things that you would never have done otherwise.

Learning to cope

After any treatment for cancer it can take some time to come to terms with your emotions. Coping with the physical effects of treatment can also add to the burden of dealing with cancer.

While it is true that some treatments can have some unpleasant side-effects, many people are able to live a normal life during treatment. You will need to take some time off for your treatment as well as time afterwards to recover. Just do as much as you feel like and take plenty of rest. It is not a sign of failure to ask for help or to feel unable to cope on your own. Once other people understand how you are feeling, they can give you more support.

How can my family and friends help?

Families and friends can support you through your cancer journey in different ways. Some family members and friends can offer a listening ear and give advice if needed. Some may gather up-to-date information on cancer to know what you can expect and what you are going through. Others may prefer to help you in a practical way with travelling to and from the hospital, with childcare, cooking, shopping or housework. It may take time to know which way suits you and your friend or relative best.

How to talk to someone with cancer

When someone close to you has cancer it can be hard to know what to do. Their welfare may be a priority for you, but you might still be unsure when to visit or what to talk about. You may be afraid of upsetting them or saying the wrong thing. So it may seem best to pretend that everything is okay and carry on as normal. Sadly, by not talking to your friend or loved one, it can make them feel even more lonely and isolated. Try not to withdraw because you’re afraid of their illness or what might happen in the future. Although some people do die from cancer, many do not. Be honest with your own feelings too.

Be patient

Often those with cancer do not wish to burden their family and friends with their worries and concerns. Gentle encouragement can sometimes help. But don’t rush into talking about their illness – knowing that you are always ready to listen and give help may reassure them. You may not think you are doing much by just listening. In fact, it is one of the best ways to help.

Sometimes your friend or relative may get cross or irritable for what may seem to be no good reason. These feelings are completely normal. Be as patient and understanding as you can. Give them the space and time to adjust to the changes in their life. Above all, let them know that you are there, if they want to talk or need help. In time, life will begin to be normal again.

Lost for Words: How to Talk to Someone with Cancer is a useful booklet written for relatives and friends of people with cancer and is available from the Irish Cancer Society. For a copy, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download it from www.cancer.ie
Every family deals with cancer in a different way. You may feel that you do not want your illness to upset family life, or feel guilty that you cannot do activities with your children or grandchildren, or that you’re letting them down. These are all natural feelings to have at this time.

**Be honest**

The main thing to remember is that being honest with your family really helps. Keeping your illness a secret may not be the best thing for your children. It can put added pressures on your family and lead to confusion. Children are very sensitive to stress and tension and if you try to protect them by saying nothing, they may feel isolated. In fact, they may have greater fears if told nothing.

It is best that you or your partner tell your children about your cancer diagnosis. If this is not possible then someone else close to your children should break the news.

How much you tell children will depend on their age and level of maturity. Very young children do not understand illness and need a simple reason why their parent or friend is sick and has to go to hospital regularly. A story about good cells and bad cells usually works well. Most children over 10 years of age can take in fairly full explanations of why you are sick. Adolescents can understand far more. Talk to children in language they will understand but without going into the details of your illness.

It is best to prepare children for what to expect from the side-effects of treatments before they happen, and to answer their questions simply and honestly. For example, if you have hair loss due to treatment. It is also important not to force your children to talk about your illness. If they rebel or turn quiet, it may be their way of showing their feelings.

**Coping with children’s emotions**

During your illness, your children may experience a range of emotions from fear, guilt, anger to neglect, loneliness, isolation and embarrassment. They need to be reassured that your illness is not their fault. Whether they show it or not, children may feel that they somehow are to blame. But by having an open honest approach, it may bring you a sense of relief. Your family may also find new depths of love and inner strength that will boost your life together.

If you need some extra help in dealing with children, talk to your nurse or medical social worker. A useful booklet called *Talking to Children about Cancer: A Guide for Parents* gives practical advice for talking to children about cancer. If you would like a copy, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700, visit a Daffodil Centre or download it from [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie).

### Advice for carers

#### Looking after yourself

Being a partner, carer or friend of someone with cancer can be both a challenging and a rewarding experience. However, it can also be tiring, frustrating and distressing. You also may be worried or anxious about the future, have fears about the effects of treatment, of recurrence and about future tests. If you are to continue to keep your strength and your spirits up, then it is important to take good care of yourself.

- **Learn more about cancer and the emotional effects it can cause.** This will help you to understand what you can do to help, and have realistic expectations of treatments.

- **Make sure you share your worries with someone else.** Stay in touch with your own friends and get out when you can. Visit a friend for a chat or go shopping. Take the opportunity to get out and meet other people, even if you sometimes don’t feel like it.

- **If you live with someone who is anxious or depressed, try to make time for a break each day.** This can help even if it is just a walk to the shops or a trip to the library. This will give you something to look forward to each day. Ideally, you should also try to organise a longer break, such as an evening out with friends or a trip to the cinema each week.

- **If you don’t want to take a break, then at least give yourself little treats to keep yourself going.** Order your favourite magazine each week and give yourself an hour to sit down with a cup of tea or coffee to read it. Or make sure that you have peace to watch your favourite TV programme, have a long soak in the bath after a difficult day, or an early night with a good book.
- **If you find it difficult to cope, get help.** If you have a close friend, talk through how you are feeling. If this is not possible or you don’t have anyone you trust, talk to your doctor. He or she can talk through your frustrations and feelings and can suggest other sources of help.
- **Protect your physical health too.** See your doctor sooner rather than later if you have any niggling concerns about your own health.
- **Find out about self-help groups.** Those especially for carers of people with cancer can be very helpful.

For more advice, contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. Ask for a copy of the booklet, *Caring for Someone with Lung Cancer: A Guide for Carers*, or download it from [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)

### How can I help myself?

Everyone experiences cancer in a different way. And how each person copes with cancer varies too. There is no right or wrong way to cope, only your way. During your illness there are many things that you can learn, not only about cancer itself but also about you as a person. Here is a list of things to help make you feel more involved and more in control of your illness. They can help to boost your self-esteem and well-being, making it easier to deal with cancer.

- **Communicate with your family and close friends:** Do not keep your worries or symptoms secret from the people closest to you. This includes physical or emotional problems. Ask the person closest to you to come with you when visiting the doctor and when treatments will be discussed.
- **Live one day at a time:** Don’t think about the future too much. Concentrate on the present and getting through each day of tests or treatment. That way, you may find it easier to cope with your illness.
- **Live well:** Try to eat as well as you can. Eat little and often, including lots of different types of foods with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Do some regular exercise that you enjoy. Take it easy at first, building up the amount you do as you feel stronger.

- **Expect change in your life:** Even though you may want to stick to your old routines, sometimes this may not be possible. It may take a while to adjust to your new routine but keep an open mind. Change may bring new opportunities and blessings.
- **Keep an open mind:** Don’t feel you have to be positive all the time. Expect ups and downs during your cancer journey. There will be times when you feel low but don’t feel guilty about it, as it will pass.
- **Seek information:** Be sure to ask your doctor as many questions as you can and get involved in decisions about your treatment. Always ask for information that is personal to you. Ask what side-effects you can expect so you can prepare for them. Build up as much information about your cancer and treatment as possible. Follow your doctor’s instructions carefully. Take your medication. If you forget and are not sure what to do, ask your doctor. Keep a notebook of all your dates for blood tests, X-rays, scans, treatments, symptoms, side-effects, medications, and your general health. Keep a record of any emotions you are feeling too, especially strong ones. Call 1800 200 700 for a free copy of *Journey Journal* to help you keep track of your cancer treatment.
- **Find what works for you:** It can help to use whatever way of coping that has helped you solve problems in the past. Some people are comfortable taking about their illness, others are not. You may prefer relaxation, meditation, walking, listening to music or other approaches helpful. Do whatever suits you. But if it’s not working, be open to finding a new way to cope.
- **Build a support network:** Be realistic about what you can manage by yourself. No man is an island, so seek help from those who want to support you. Talk to your family, friends, nurses or doctors. Meet with other patients in support groups and self-help groups as they can understand what you are going through. If the group does not suit you and is not helping, leave it.
- **Seek professional help:** If you have any low moods or strong emotions talk to your close friends and family – or someone who is a good listener. If your emotions are still getting the better of you, discuss them with your nurse and doctor. They may recommend you talk to a trained counsellor or other specialist.
Spiritual care: When faced with a cancer diagnosis and treatment, you may start thinking about the meaning of life and the afterlife. Sometimes spiritual and religious beliefs can bring comfort and hope. Prayer or meditation can help you focus on what has value and meaning in your life. Even if you don’t consider yourself a religious or spiritual person, you can still get comfort and support from prayer or meditation. Some complementary medicines that have a spiritual dimension may also help you to focus on being positive and hopeful.

Express yourself: Keep a diary or journal if you need to express yourself without holding back. It can help you make sense of your cancer journey and can bring great healing and relief. Other forms of creative expression, such as music and art, may help too.

Two useful booklets are available: Understanding the Emotional Effects of Cancer and Who Can Ever Understand: Talking about Your Cancer. For copies, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download them from www.cancer.ie

Support resources

Who else can help?

There are many people ready to help you and your family throughout treatment and afterwards.

- Medical social worker
- Cancer nurse specialists
- Psycho-oncology services
- Family doctor (GP)
- Community welfare officer and community health services
- Support groups and cancer support centres
- Irish Cancer Society helpline nurses

Medical social worker: The medical social worker in your hospital can help in many ways. He or she can give support and counselling to you and your family and give advice on practical and financial supports and services available when you go home.

Cancer nurse specialists: Some of the major cancer treatment hospitals have oncology liaison nurses and/or cancer nurse coordinators. These specially trained nurses can support you and your family from the time of diagnosis and throughout treatment. The nurses along with other members of your medical team work together to meet your needs.

Psycho-oncology services: In some larger hospitals there are special units that provide psycho-oncology services. This means that you can receive psychological care and support during your diagnosis, treatment and recovery by a team of experts. Usually the team consists of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and nurses working closely together.

GP (family doctor): You may feel comfortable talking to your family doctor (GP) about your lung cancer too. He or she can discuss any of your queries and offer advice and support.
Community health services: There are various community health services available from your local health centre. These centres have public health nurses (who can visit you at home), welfare officers and home-help organisers. If you live far from your hospital, your community welfare officer can also help with practical issues such as financial problems or exceptional needs. More information on the services is available either from the medical social worker in your hospital before you go home or at your local health centre.

Support groups: Joining a support group can put you in touch with people who have been in a similar situation. Cancer support centres are found in most counties in Ireland and can offer a wide range of services. Some are listed at the back of this booklet. Useful websites, including patient forums, are also listed. You can download the Irish Cancer Society’s Directory of Cancer Support Services from www.cancer.ie

Irish Cancer Society: The staff of the Cancer Information Service will be happy to discuss any concerns you or your family may have, at any stage of your illness. This can range from treatment information to practical advice about your financial matters.

Call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 for information about any of the services outlined above or for support services in your area. Or if you prefer, you can also visit a Daffodil Centre.

Remember that there are many people ready to help you.

Health cover

Health cover falls into two groups – cover for medical card holders and cover for all other groups. Details of the following are given here:

- Hospital cover
- Outpatient cover
- Medical card
- GP visit card
- Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS)
- Private healthcare cover
- Benefits and allowances

At the end of this section there are also some useful telephone numbers and websites for further help.

Hospital cover

At present, everyone is entitled to hospital inpatient services in a public ward in all public hospitals. There is a €75 a night charge up to a limit of €750 in 1 year. These charges do not apply to medical card holders. Higher rates apply for semi-private or private care.

Outpatient cover

If you go to the outpatients or emergency department of a public hospital, without being referred there by a GP, you may be charged €100. There is no charge if you have a medical card or are admitted to hospital because of attending the emergency department first.

Medical card

A medical card usually allows you, your spouse and any child under 16 to free GP services, prescribed drugs and medicines, inpatient public hospital services as well as outpatient services and medical appliances. You may have to pay a prescription charge of €2.50 per item up to a limit of €25 per family per month.

To qualify for a medical card depends on a means test regardless of age. If you are over 70 and your weekly income is €500 or less (€900 for couples), you can still apply for a card. Financial guidelines are set out each year and are available from your local Health Service Executive (HSE) office. If your means are above but close to the guidelines, you should apply for a card anyway as a card may be granted in some situations. For example, if you have a large amount of medical expenses. This is known as a discretionary medical card. But it will depend on your financial circumstances and how long your treatment is expected to last. In this case, your spouse and children will not be covered if your means are over the limit. If you wish to apply for a medical card, you can download an application form and apply online (www.medicalcard.ie) or at your local health centre. LoCall 1890 252 919.

GP visit card

If you do not qualify for a full medical card, you may be eligible for a GP visit card. This card covers visits to your doctor only and you will have to pay for drugs, outpatient/inpatient charges and medical
understanding cancer of the lung

application forms for the benefits are available from social welfare offices or Social Welfare Services Office, Government Buildings, Ballinalee Road, Longford. Tel: (043) 334 0000 or LoCall 1890 927 770. You can also download the forms from www.welfare.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie

appliances

If you have a medical card most appliances are free of charge or subsidised. For example, if you have hair loss due to chemotherapy, you are entitled to 1–2 free or subsidised new hairpieces every year. The subsidy will depend on the HSE area.

Travel to hospital

You can be faced with many expenses including travelling to and from hospital. If your travel costs are very expensive, discuss it with your medical social worker at the hospital. Limited help may also be available from your community welfare officer. Some HSE areas provide transport services to hospitals for outpatient appointments and day centres, usually for patients with medical cards.

see page 70 for information on the Care to Drive and Travel2Care schemes run by the Irish Cancer Society. Some local communities may also provide volunteer transport services.

further information

Depending on your circumstances at the time of your illness, there are many other benefits and entitlements that may be relevant to you. Always have your PPS number (old RSI number) to hand when you are enquiring about entitlements and benefits. The most direct way to check your eligibility is to contact:

- Your community welfare officer in your local health centre
- The medical social worker in the hospital you are attending.

For social welfare queries, contact:

Dept of Social Protection – Information Service
Oisín House
212–213 Pearse Street
Dublin 2

Tel: 1850 662 244
Leaflet line: 1890 202 325
Email: info@welfare.ie
Website: www.welfare.ie

appliances yourself. It is means tested but will take into account your after-tax income and certain expenses like childcare, rent/mortgage and travel to work. Check with the medical social worker at your hospital or your HSE office to see if you are eligible. If you wish to apply for a GP visit card, you can download an application form and apply online (www.medicalcard.ie) or at your local health centre. LoCall 1890 252 919.

Drugs Payment Scheme

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS), individuals and families, including spouses and dependent children, pay a limit of €144 each month to cover the cost of prescribed drugs, medicines and appliances. You can apply for cover under the scheme by contacting your local HSE office or local pharmacy.

Private healthcare cover

Private health insurance pays for private care in hospital or from various specialists in hospitals or in their practices. In Ireland, this is available through the VHI, Laya Healthcare, AVIVA Health, GloHealth, and other schemes. They provide cover for day care or inpatient treatment and hospital outpatient treatment. Before attending hospital, do check the level of cover provided by your insurer, both for inpatient and outpatient services.

If you have private insurance, your tests might not get done as quickly as you would like. Your health insurer has to approve some tests in advance. For example, MRI and PET scans. Sometimes it might take 24–48 hours to get approval from your health insurer.

Benefits and allowances

You or a family member may qualify for a number of benefits and allowances. For example, Illness Benefit, Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension, Carer’s Allowance, Carer’s Benefit, Carer’s Leave. More information is available in a booklet called Managing the Financial Impact of Cancer: A Guide for Patients and Their Families. For a free copy, contact the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 or visit a Daffodil Centre. You can also download it from www.cancer.ie

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212–213 Pearse Street
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Tel: 1850 662 244
Leaflet line: 1890 202 325
Email: info@welfare.ie
Website: www.welfare.ie
If you have queries about health and social services, contact the HSE office in your area. **HSE infoline:** 1850 24 1850 **Email:** info@hse.ie
**Website:** www.hse.ie

Information is also available from your local Citizens Information Centre. A list of these centres is available from:

**Citizens Information**  
Tel: 0761 07 4000  
Email: information@citizensinformation.ie  
Website: www.citizensinformation.ie

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**Irish Cancer Society services**

The Irish Cancer Society funds a range of support services that provide care and support for people with cancer at home and in hospital.

- **Cancer Information Service (CIS)**  
- **Daffodil Centres**  
- **Cancer support groups**  
- **Survivors Supporting Survivors**  
- **Counselling**  
- **Night nursing**  
- **Oncology liaison nurses**  
- **Cancer information booklets and factsheets**  
- **Financial support**  
- **Care to Drive transport project**

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**If you have financial worries…**

A diagnosis of lung cancer can sometimes bring the added burden of financial worries. You may find that you have a lot more expenses, like medication, travel, food, heating, laundry, clothing and childcare costs. If you are unable to work or **unemployed**, this may cause even more stress. It may be hard for you to deal with cancer if you are worried about providing for your family and keeping a roof over your head.

There is help available if you find it hard to cope with all these expenses. Contact your medical social worker in the hospital or your local health centre for advice. The Irish Cancer Society can also in certain cases give some assistance towards travel costs and other expenses because of your illness. See page 69 for more details. You can also call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 and the nurse will suggest ways to help you manage.

If you feel you are getting into debt or are in debt, there is help available. Contact the Money Advice and Budgeting Service on the MABS Helpline 0761 07 2000. This service can help you work through any financial issues you have. They can assess your situation, work out your budget, help you deal with your debts and manage your payments. The service is free and confidential. See page 71 for contact details. A useful book for preparing low-budget nutritious meals is *101+ Square Meals*. See page 77 for more information.

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**Cancer Information Service (CIS)**

The Society provides a Cancer Information Service with a wide range of services. The **National Cancer Helpline 1800 200 700** is a freephone service that gives confidential information, support and guidance to people concerned about cancer. It is staffed by specialist cancer nurses who have access to the most up-to-date facts on cancer-related issues. These include prevention of cancer, risk factors, screening, dealing with a cancer diagnosis, different treatments, counselling and other support services. The helpline can also put you in contact with the various support groups that are available. The helpline is open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 7pm, and every Friday from 9am to 5pm.

- The website [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie) provides information on all aspects of cancer.
- All queries or concerns about cancer can be emailed to the CIS at helpline@irishcancer.ie
- **Message Board** is a discussion space on our website to share your stories, ideas and advice with others.
- The **CancerChat** service is a live chatroom with a link to a CIS nurse.
- The **walk-in caller service** allows anyone with concerns about cancer to freely visit the Society to discuss them in private.
- Find us on **Facebook** and follow us on **Twitter** (@IrishCancerSoc).
Daffodil Centres
Daffodil Centres are located in a number of Irish hospitals. They have been set up by the Irish Cancer Society in partnership with each hospital and are an extension of the Cancer Information Service. They are generally found near the main entrance of the hospital and are open during the day. Staffed by a specialist nurse and trained volunteers, they provide a range of information, advice, help and support on all aspects of cancer, free of charge.

Daffodil Centres give you a chance to talk in confidence and be listened to and heard. If you are concerned about cancer, diagnosed with cancer or caring for someone with cancer, you are welcome to visit the centre. Do check to see if there is a Daffodil Centre in your hospital.

Cancer support groups
The Irish Cancer Society funds a range of support groups set up to support you and your family at time of diagnosis, throughout treatment and afterwards. See pages 72–75 for more details.

Survivors Supporting Survivors
Being diagnosed with cancer can be one of the hardest situations to face in your lifetime. Survivors Supporting Survivors is a one-to-one support programme run by the Irish Cancer Society. It provides emotional and practical support to newly diagnosed patients. It can provide you and your relatives with information, advice and emotional support from time of diagnosis and for as long as is needed. All the volunteers have had a personal experience of cancer and understand the emotional and physical impacts of the disease. They are carefully selected after recovery and are trained to provide information and reassurance. The service is provided on a one-to-one basis and is confidential. If you would like to make contact with a volunteer, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700.

Counselling
Coping with a diagnosis of cancer can be very stressful at times. Sometimes it can be hard for you and your family to come to terms with your illness. You might also find it difficult to talk to a close friend or relative. In this case, counselling can give you emotional support in a safe and confidential environment. Call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700 to find out about counselling services provided by the Irish Cancer Society and services available in your area.

Night nursing
The Society can provide a night nurse, free of charge, for up to 10 nights if you need end-of-life care at home. The night nurse can also give practical support and reassurance to your family. You can find out more about this service from your GP, local public health nurse, a member of the homecare team or the palliative care services at the hospital. Homecare nurses can offer advice on pain control and managing other symptoms.

Oncology liaison nurses
The Society funds some oncology liaison nurses who can give you and your family information as well as emotional and practical support. Oncology liaison nurses work as part of the hospital team in specialist cancer centres.

Cancer information booklets and factsheets
These booklets provide information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment, while the factsheets deal with very specific topics. The booklets also offer practical advice on learning how to cope with your illness. These booklets and factsheets are available free of charge from the Irish Cancer Society by calling 1800 200 700. They can also be downloaded from www.cancer.ie or picked up at a Daffodil Centre.

Financial support
A diagnosis of cancer can bring with it the added burden of financial worries. In certain circumstances, the Irish Cancer Society can provide limited financial help to patients in great need. You may be suitable for schemes such as Travel2Care or Financial Aid.
Travel2Care is funded by the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) and managed by the Irish Cancer Society. The scheme can help with your travel costs if you have genuine financial hardship due to travelling to a designated cancer centre or approved satellite centre. It will help with the costs of public transport, such as trains or buses, private transport costs, or petrol and parking. If you are travelling over 30 km to a Rapid Access Diagnostic Clinic, you may qualify for the Travel2Care scheme.

**Travel2Care:** If you would like to request this kind of help, contact your oncology nurse or the Irish Cancer Society at (01) 231 6643 / 231 6619 or email: travel2care@irishcancer.ie

**Financial Aid:** A special fund has been created to help families in financial hardship when faced with a cancer diagnosis. If this applies to you, contact the medical social work department in your hospital. You can also speak to your oncology liaison nurse or contact the Irish Cancer Society at (01) 231 6619.

**Care to Drive transport project**

Care to Drive is a scheme operated by the Irish Cancer Society. It provides free transport for patients to and from their chemotherapy using volunteer drivers. All of the volunteers are carefully selected, vetted and trained. You are collected from your home, driven to your appointment and brought back home again. Call (01) 231 0522 for more information.

If you would like more information on any of the above services, call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700. See our website for more information: www.cancer.ie
Understanding cancer of the lung

Survivors Supporting Survivors
ARC Cancer Support Centres
Dublin and Cork (see pages 73 and 74).

Lakelands Area Retreat & Cancer Centre
Multyfarnham
Mullingar
Co Westmeath
Tel: 044 937 1971
CallSave: 1850 71 9719
Email: info@larcc.ie
Website: www.larcc.ie

For more details, contact the Irish Cancer Society at 1800 200 700 or email: support@irishcancer.ie

Connought support groups & centres
Athens Cancer Care
Social Service Centre
New Line
Athens Co Galway
Tel: 091 844 319 / 087 412 8080

Ballinasloe Cancer Support Centre
Society Street
Ballinasloe
Co Galway
Tel: 090 964 5574 / 087 945 2300
Email: ballinasloe@gmail.com
Cara Iorrais Cancer Support Centre
2 Church Street
Belmullet
Co Mayo
Tel: 097 20590
Email: caraicolorais@gmail.com

Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI)
IDA Business Park
Purcellsinch
Dublin Road
Kilkenny
CallSave: 1850 44 44 44
Email: info@vhi.ie
Website: www.vhi.ie

Leinster support groups & centres
ARC Cancer Support Centre
ARC House
65 Eccles Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 830 7333
Email: info@arcancersupport.ie
Website: www.arcancersupport.ie

ARC Cancer Support Centre
ARC House
559 South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Tel: 01 707 8880
Email: info@arcancersupport.ie
Website: www.arcancersupport.ie

Arklow Cancer Support Group
25 Kingshill
Arklow
Co Wicklow
Tel: 085 110 0066
Email: arklowcancersupport@gmail.com

Balbriggan Cancer Support Group
Unit 23, Balbriggan Business Park
Balbriggan
Co Dublin
Tel: 087 353 2872
Email: info@braycancersupport.ie
Website: www.braycancersupport.ie

Bray Cancer Support & Information Centre
368 Main Street
Bray
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 286 6966
Email: info@braycancersupport.ie
Website: www.braycancersupport.ie

Cara Cancer Support Centre
Mullavally
Louth Village
Dundalk
Co Louth
Tel: 042 937 4905
Mobile: 087 395 5335
Email: info@ccscdundalk.ie
Website: ccscdundalk.ie

Cois Nore: Cancer Support Services
Kilkenny
8 Walskin Street
Kilkenny
Tel: 056 775 2222
Email: coisnorekilkenny@gmail.com
Website: www.kilkennycancersupport.ie

Cuisle Centre
Cancer Support Group
Block Road
Portaloise
Co Laois
Tel: 057 868 1492
Email: info@cuislecentre.com
Website: www.cuislecentre.com

Dóchas: Offaly Cancer Support
Teach Dóchas
Offaly Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 057 932 8268
Email: info@dochasoffaly.ie
Website: www.dochasoffaly.ie

Éist Cancer Support Centre Carlow
The Waterfront
Mill Lane
Carlow
Tel: 059 913 9684
Mobile: 085 144 0510
Email: info@eistcarlowcancersupport.ie
Website: www.eistcarlowcancersupport.ie

Gary Kelly Support Centre
George’s Street
Drogheda
Co Louth
Tel: 041 980 5100 / 086 817 2473
Email: services@gkscancersupport.com
Website: www.gkscancersupport.com

Greystones Cancer Support
La Touche Place
Greystones
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 287 1601
Email: info@greystonescancersupport.ie
Website: www.greystonescancersupport.com

East Galway Cancer Support Centre
The Family Centre
John Dunne Avenue
Ballinasloe
Co Galway
Tel: 087 984 5574 / 087 945 2300
Website: www.eastgalwaycancersupport.com

Gort Cancer Support Group
The Hawthorn
Ennis Road
Gort
Co Galway
Tel: 086 312 4220
Email: gcsupport@eircom.net
Website: www.gortcs.ie

Mayo Cancer Support Association
Rock Rose House
32 St Patrick’s Avenue
Castlebar
Co Mayo
Tel: 094 903 8407
Email: info@mayocancer.ie
Website: www.mayocancer.ie

Roscommon Cancer Support Group
Vita House Family Centre
Abbey Street
Roscommon
Tel: 090 662 5898
Email: vitahouse@eircom.net

Sligo Cancer Support Centre
44 Wine Street
Sligo
Tel: 071 917 0399
Email: scsc@eircom.net
Website: www.sligocancersupportcentre.ie

Tuam Cancer Care Centre
Cricket Court
Dunmore Road
Tuam
Co Galway
Tel: 093 28522
Email: support@tuamcancercare.ie
Website: www.tuamcancercare.ie

Éist Cancer Support Centre Carlow
The Waterfront
Mill Lane
Carlow
Tel: 059 913 9684
Mobile: 085 144 0510
Email: info@eistcarlowcancersupport.ie
Website: www.eistcarlowcancersupport.ie

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Mobile: 085 144 0510
Email: info@eistcarlowcancersupport.ie
Website: www.eistcarlowcancersupport.ie

Éist Cancer Support Centre Carlow
The Waterfront
Mill Lane
Carlow
Tel: 059 913 9684
Mobile: 085 144 0510
Email: info@eistcarlowcancersupport.ie
Website: www.eistcarlowcancersupport.ie

Greystones Cancer Support
La Touche Place
Greystones
Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 287 1601
Email: info@greystonescancersupport.ie
Website: www.greystonescancersupport.com

For more details, contact the Irish Cancer Society at 1800 200 700 or email: support@irishcancer.ie
Munster support groups & centres

Cancer Information & Support Centre
Mid-Western Regional Hospital
Dooraadolye
Co Limerick
Tel: 061 485 163
Website: www.midwesterncancercentre.ie

CARE Cancer Support Centre
14 Wellington Street
Clonmel
Co Tipperary
Tel: 052 618 2667
Email: cancersupport@eircom.net
Website: www.cancercare.ie

Cork ARC Cancer Support House
Cliffdale
5 O’Donovan Rossa Road
Cork
Tel: 021 427 6688
Email: info@ corkcancersupport.ie
Website: www.corkcancersupport.ie

Kerry Cancer Support Group
124 Tralee Town House Apartments
Maine Street
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 719 5560 / 087 230 8734
Email: kerrycancersupport@eircom.net
Website: www.kerrycancersupport.com

Recovery Haven
5 Haig’s Terrace
Tralee
Co Kerry
Tel: 066 719 2122
Email: recoveryhaven@gmail.com
Website: www.recoveryhavencork.org

Ulster support groups & centres

Cancer Support and Social Club
Tienaleague
Carndonagh
Co Donegal
Tel: 086 602 8993 / 087 763 4596
Email: coiste.scaoil.saor@aol.com
Website: www.scaoil.saor.ie

South Eastern Cancer Foundation
Solas Centre
7 Sealy Close
Earlscourt
Waterford
Tel: 051 876 629
Email: infosecf@eircom.net
Website: www.secf.ie

Suimhneas Cancer Support Centre
2 Clonaslee
Gortland Roe
Nenagh
Co Tipperary
Tel: 067 37403
Email: suaimhneascancersupport@eircom.net

Youghal Cancer Support Group
161 North Main Street
Youghal
Co Cork
Tel: 024 923501 / 087 273 1121
Email: coiste.scaoil.saor@aol.com
Website: www.scaoil.saor.ie

Crocus: Monaghan Cancer Support Centre
The Wellness Centre
19 The Grange
Plantation Walk
Monaghan
Tel: 087 368 0965

Cuan Cancer Social Support and Wellness Group
2nd Floor, Cootehill Credit Union
22–24 Market Street
Cootehill
Co Cavan
Tel: 086 455 6632

The Forge Cancer Support Group
The Forge Family Resource Centre
Petitio
Co Donegal
Tel: 071 986 1924

Living Beyond Cancer
Oncology Day Services
Letterkenny General Hospital
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 912 5888 (Bleep 674/734) / 074 910 4477

Support group & centres unaffiliated to Irish Cancer Society

Cancer Care West
Inis Aoidhinn
University Hospital Galway
Costello Road
Galway
Tel: 091 545 000
Email: info@cancercarewest.ie
Website: www.cancercarewest.ie

Cúnamh: Bons Secours Cancer Support Group
Bon Secours Hospital
College Road
Cork
Tel: 021 480 1676
Website: www.cunamh.ie
Understanding cancer of the lung

Helpful books

Free booklets from Irish Cancer Society:
- Diagnosing Cancer of the Lung
- Understanding Chemotherapy
- Understanding Radiotherapy
- Diet and Cancer: A Guide for Patients with Cancer
- Understanding Cancer and Complementary Therapies
- Coping with Fatigue
- Understanding the Emotional Effects of Cancer
- Lost for Words: How to Talk to Someone with Cancer
- Who Can Ever Understand? Taking about Your Cancer
- Talking to Children about Cancer: A Guide for Parents
- Caring for Someone with Lung Cancer: A Guide for Carers
- A Time to Care: Caring for Someone Seriously Ill at Home
- Managing the Financial Impact of Cancer: A Guide for Patients and Their Families
- Journey Journal: Keeping Track of Your Cancer Treatment

Free factsheets/DVDS:
- Breathlessness and Cancer
- Mesothelioma and Asbestos
- A Guide to Chemotherapy (DVD)
- Understanding Radiation Therapy: A Patient Pathway (DVD)
- Advanced Radiotherapy Treatments
- Living with Lung Cancer: A Guide to Help You through the Journey Ahead (DVD)

Lung Cancer: A Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment
Walter J Scott
Addicus Books, 2nd edn, 2012
ISBN: 978-1886039094

Lung Cancer: The Facts
Stephen Falk & Chris Williams
Oxford University Press, 3rd edn, 2009
ISBN 978-0199569335

101+ Square Meals
[Nutrition and taste]
Norah Bourke et al
MABS/HSE West/Paul Partnership/Limerick VEC/SafeFood, 1998
ISBN 187407514X
[For more details see www.mabs.ie]

Useful contacts outside Republic of Ireland

Action Cancer
Action Cancer House
1 Marlborough Park
Belfast BT9 6XS
Tel: 028 9080 3344
Email: info@actioncancer.org
Website: www.actioncancer.org

American Lung Association
Website: www.lungusa.org

Cancer Network Buddies
www.cancerbuddiesnetwork.org

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland
40–44 Eglantine Avenue
Belfast BT9 6DX
Tel: 048 9066 3281
Email: hello@cancerfocusni.org
Website: www.cancerfocusni.org

Cancer Research UK
Tel: 0044 20 7242 0200
Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Global Lung Cancer Coalition
Website: www.lungcancercoalition.org

Lung Cancer Online Foundation (US)
Website: www.lungcanceronline.org

Healhtalkonline
www.healhtalkonline.org

Macmillan Cancer Support (UK)
Tel: 0044 20 7840 7840
Email: cancerline@macmillan.org.uk
Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Support & Information Centre
Belfast City Hospital Trust
77–81 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 7AB
Tel: 028 9069 9202
Email: cancerinfo@belfasttrust.hscni.net

National Cancer Institute (US)
Website: www.nci.nih.gov

For other support groups or centres in your area, call 1800 200 700.

Dundalk Cancer Support Group
Phillipstown
Hackballscross
Dundalk
Co Louth
Tel: 086 107 4257

Good and New Cancer Drop In Centre
Unit 1, Portlink Business Park
Port Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 911 3437

Killybegs Cancer Support Group
Killeen
Kilcar
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 973 1292
Email: riverbankdunne@eircom.net

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Kilcar
Co Donegal
Tel: 074 973 1292
Email: riverbankdunne@eircom.net

Solace: Donegal Cancer Support Centre
St Joseph’s Avenue
Donegal Town
Tel: 074 974 0837
Email: solacedonegal@eircom.net

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National Cancer Helpline Freefone 1800 200 700
Understanding cancer of the lung

What does that word mean?

**Nausea**
Feeling sick or wanting to be sick.

**Neo-adjuvant**
Treatment given before surgery to reduce the size of the tumour.

**Oncology**
The study of cancer.

**Radiation oncologist**
A doctor who specialises in treating cancer patients using radiotherapy.

**Radiotherapy**
The treatment of cancer using high-energy rays.

**Staging**
A series of tests that measure the size, location and extent of cancer.

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**Adjuvant treatment**
Treatment given soon after surgery when a diagnosis of cancer is made.

**Alopecia**
Baldness. No hair where you normally have hair.

**Anti-emetic**
A tablet, injection or suppository to stop you feeling sick or vomiting.

**Benign**
Not cancer. A tumour that does not spread.

**Biopsy**
The removal of a small amount of tissue from your body to find out if cancer cells are present.

**Bronchoscopy**
A test where your doctor can look inside your lung airways using a thin flexible tube called a bronchoscope. It is like a small telescope that can take pictures like a camera.

**Cells**
The building blocks that make up your body. They are tiny and can only be seen under a microscope.

**Chemotherapy**
Treatment using drugs to cure or control cancer.

**Malignant**
Cancer. A tumour that spreads.

**Mediastinum**
The area in the middle of your chest containing your heart, large blood vessels and oesophagus (gullet). Your lungs are on either side of it.

**Medical oncologist**
A doctor who specialises in treating cancer patients using chemotherapy and other drugs.

**Metastasis**
The spread of cancer from one part of your body to other tissues and organs.
Questions to ask your doctor

Here is a list of questions you might like to ask your doctor. There is also some space for you to write down your own questions if you wish. Never be shy about asking questions. It is always better to ask than to worry.

- What tests do I need?

- What type of lung cancer do I have? Where is it exactly?

- What type of treatment do I need?

- How successful is this treatment for my cancer?

- Are there other treatment options? Why is this one best for me?

- What side-effects or after-effects will I have?

- How long will my treatment take?

- Do I have to stay in hospital for my treatment?

- Is there anything I can do to help myself during treatment?

- Do I need to use contraception during my treatment? What will happen if I, or my partner, become pregnant?

- Should I eat special foods?
Acknowledgements
We would like to extend a special word of thanks to the following for their invaluable contributions to this booklet and/or previous editions:
Clodagh Glynn, Cancer Nurse Co-ordinator
Mary Kavanagh, Clinical Nurse Manager
Una Molloy, Nursing Services Manager
Clodagh Roche, Medical Social Worker
Rita Luddy, Cancer Nurse Co-ordinator

Would you like more information?
We hope this booklet has been of help to you. After reading it or at any time in the future, if you would like more information or someone to talk to, please call the National Cancer Helpline on 1800 200 700.

Would you like to be a patient reviewer?
If you have any suggestions as to how this booklet could be improved, we would be delighted to hear from you. The views of patients, relatives, carers and friends are all welcome. Your comments would help us greatly in the preparation of future information booklets for people with cancer and their carers. Please fill in the postcard in the pocket inside the back cover, and post it back to us for free.

If you wish to email your comments, have an idea for a new booklet or would like to review any of our booklets, please contact us at reviewers@irishcancer.ie

If you would prefer to phone or write to us, see contact details below.

Would you like to help us?
The Irish Cancer Society relies entirely on voluntary contributions from the public to fund its programmes of patient care, education and research. This includes patient information booklets. If you would like to support our work in any way – perhaps by making a donation or by organising a local fundraising event – please contact us at CallSave 1850 60 60 60 or email: fundraising@irishcancer.ie

Irish Cancer Society, 43/45 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 231 0500 Email: info@irishcancer.ie Website: www.cancer.ie