

# Understanding Lung Cancer

## What is Lung Cancer?

Lung cancer is a disease that starts in the **lungs**, the organs that help you breathe. Some lung cancers grow **slowly**, while others grow **quickly**. Lung cancer can sometimes **spread to other parts of the body**, like the liver, bones, or brain. This spreading is called **metastasis**.

## Symptoms to Watch For

Call your doctor or nurse if you notice any changes in your body:

- Persistent coughing or coughing up blood
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Unusual bleeding, persistent pain, or sudden swelling
- Fever, infections, or changes in appetite or weight
- Digestive changes or feeling very tired

**Tip:** Keep a daily log of your symptoms. Write down what you notice and when it happens.

## Treatment Overview

Your doctor may recommend one or more treatments:

- **Surgery:** Remove cancer from the lungs
- **Chemotherapy:** Medicine to kill cancer cells
- **Radiation:** High-energy beams to destroy cancer cells
- **Immunotherapy:** Medicine that helps your body fight cancer

**Possible side effects:**

- Nausea, tiredness, mouth sores, skin or hair changes
- Increased risk of infections if your immune system is weak

#### **Tips for home care:**

- Take medications exactly as prescribed
- Watch for signs of infection like fever, redness, or swelling

### **Nutrition and Hydration**

Eating well helps your body recover:

- Choose foods high in protein, vitamins, and calories
- Eat **small meals often** if you feel nauseated or have a low appetite
- Drink plenty of fluids and watch for dehydration (dry mouth, dark urine, dizziness)

### **Activity and Safety**

- Walk or stretch gently if you feel able
- Rest often and pace your activities
- Take care to **prevent falls**, especially if you feel weak or dizzy

### **Infection Prevention**

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid large crowds if your immune system is low
- Call your doctor right away if you notice fever, redness, or swelling

## Emotional and Mental Health

- It's normal to feel scared, sad, or stressed
- Talk to your family, friends, or caregivers
- Ask your nurse or doctor for **support groups, counseling, or spiritual support**

## Follow-Up and Self-Care

- Keep all doctor appointments, lab work, and scans
- Check your body for changes if appropriate (skin, mouth, or other areas)
- Call your nurse or go to the ER for **red-flag symptoms**, like:
  - Chest pain
  - Sudden swelling
  - Shortness of breath
  - Uncontrolled bleeding

## Patient Empowerment

- Ask questions: "What changes should I call my nurse about?"
- Use written instructions or visual aids to remember important care steps
- Trusted resources:
  - American Cancer Society
  - National Cancer Institute

## Patient Homework / Assessment: True or False

**Choose TRUE or FALSE for each statement.**

1. TRUE or FALSE: Lung cancer starts in the stomach.
2. TRUE or FALSE: Lung cancer can spread to other parts of the body.
3. TRUE or FALSE: Slow-growing lung cancer is never dangerous.
4. TRUE or FALSE: Coughing up blood can be a symptom of lung cancer.
5. TRUE or FALSE: Shortness of breath should be reported to your doctor.
6. TRUE or FALSE: Fever and infections can occur during lung cancer treatment.
7. TRUE or FALSE: Keeping a daily symptom log is helpful for your care team.
8. TRUE or FALSE: Chemotherapy uses medicine to fight cancer cells.
9. TRUE or FALSE: Radiation uses high-energy beams to destroy cancer cells.
10. TRUE or FALSE: It is safe to skip your medications if you feel better.
11. TRUE or FALSE: Eating foods high in protein can help your body recover.
12. TRUE or FALSE: Small, frequent meals can help if you have low appetite.
13. TRUE or FALSE: Staying hydrated is important during lung cancer treatment.
14. TRUE or FALSE: Gentle exercise can help maintain strength and reduce fatigue.
15. TRUE or FALSE: Washing your hands regularly can prevent infections.
16. TRUE or FALSE: Feeling scared or stressed during cancer treatment is normal.
17. TRUE or FALSE: You should avoid asking your nurse questions to not bother them.
18. TRUE or FALSE: Chest pain, shortness of breath, or uncontrolled bleeding should be reported immediately.
19. TRUE or FALSE: Follow-up appointments, lab work, and scans are not important after lung cancer treatment.

20. **TRUE** or **FALSE**: Resources like the American Cancer Society provide reliable information about lung cancer.

## Answer Key with Explanations

1. **FALSE** – Lung cancer starts in the **lungs**, not the stomach.
2. **TRUE** – Lung cancer can **spread to other parts of the body**.
3. **FALSE** – Slow-growing lung cancer can still be serious and needs treatment.
4. **TRUE** – **Coughing up blood** is a common symptom.
5. **TRUE** – **Shortness of breath** is a red-flag symptom that should be reported.
6. **TRUE** – Fever and infections can occur, especially if your immune system is weak.
7. **TRUE** – A **symptom log** helps your care team track changes.
8. **TRUE** – **Chemotherapy uses medicine** to kill or slow cancer cells.
9. **TRUE** – **Radiation** uses high-energy beams to target cancer cells.
10. **FALSE** – Skipping medications can make cancer harder to treat.
11. **TRUE** – Protein-rich foods help your body **heal and recover**.
12. **TRUE** – **Small, frequent meals** help when appetite is low.
13. **TRUE** – Staying hydrated is **essential** during treatment.
14. **TRUE** – Gentle exercise helps maintain strength and reduce fatigue.
15. **TRUE** – Handwashing reduces your **risk of infection**.
16. **TRUE** – Emotional stress is normal; support is available.
17. **FALSE** – Always ask questions; your nurse expects and welcomes them.
18. **TRUE** – These are **emergency symptoms** that need immediate attention.

19. **FALSE** – Follow-up care is **critical** to monitor progress and catch problems early.

20. **TRUE** – Organizations like ACS provide **trusted information and support**.

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