

# Lung Cancer

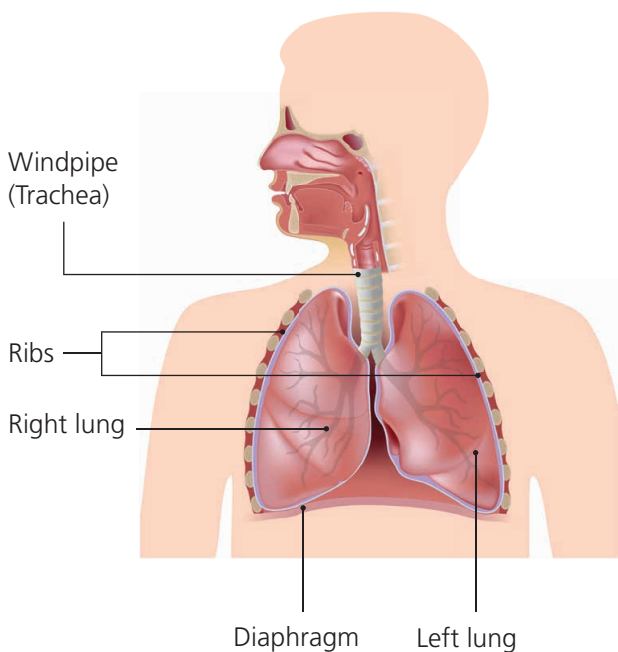
What you should know



# What is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is when normal cells in your lung grow in an abnormal way to form a lump called a tumour.

Your lungs are a pair of organs found in your chest. Your lungs are part of the respiratory system in your body, which allows you to breathe.



## What increases my risk of lung cancer?

The risk factors for lung cancer are:



**Smoking:** Smoking causes nearly 9 in every 10 lung cancers. The longer you have smoked, the greater the risk. Smoking a large number of cigarettes and breathing in other people's smoke also increase your risk.



**Family history:** If an immediate family member has had lung cancer. An immediate family member could be a parent, brother, sister, or children.



**Chemicals:** Being exposed to certain chemicals such as asbestos, metal dust, paints and diesel exhaust.



**Radon gas:** Being exposed to radon gas, in areas where levels are high. See the website of the Environmental Protection Agency ([www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)) for more information.

**Risk factors increase your chance of getting lung cancer. Having a risk factor doesn't mean you will get lung cancer. Sometimes people with no risk factors may get the disease.**

## What are the symptoms of lung cancer?

- Wheezing or difficulty breathing
- A cough that doesn't go away or a change in a long-term cough
- Repeated chest infections that won't go away, even after antibiotics
- Coughing up blood-stained phlegm
- Pain in your chest, especially when you cough or breathe in
- Swelling around your face and neck
- Difficulty swallowing

Other possible symptoms include:

- Feeling more tired than usual
- Loss of appetite and/or weight loss

**These symptoms can be caused by other things, but always get them checked out.**

# What should I do if I have any symptoms?

If you have any symptoms or changes in your body that you are worried about, it's important to have them checked by your GP (family doctor). The chances are it will not be cancer. Getting your symptoms checked is not wasting anyone's time. The sooner cancer is spotted, the more likely you are to recover.

## How is lung cancer diagnosed?

If your GP (family doctor) thinks your symptoms need to be looked at, you will have more tests. Tests that can help to diagnose lung cancer include:



**Chest X-ray:** Checks the state of your lungs.



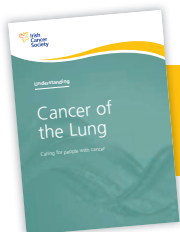
**CT scan:** Type of X-ray that gives a detailed picture of the lung.



**Bronchoscopy:** A long tube with a camera at one end to allow a doctor to view the tissues in your lung.



**Lung biopsy:** Surgery where a doctor takes tissue from your lungs and examines it.



If you are diagnosed with lung cancer, you can find more information in our booklet.

## How can I reduce my risk of lung cancer?



**Don't smoke:** By far the most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of lung cancer is to stop smoking. Cigarettes, pipes, cigars, hand-rolled and low-tar cigarettes all increase the risk. It's never too late to quit. The **sooner** you **stop**, the more you **reduce** your risk.



**Avoid second-hand smoke:** Breathing in other people's smoke also exposes you to harmful chemicals.



**Protect yourself from chemicals and pollutants:** Certain chemicals such as asbestos, metal, dust, paints, and diesel exhaust can increase your risk. Always follow health and safety instructions.



**Look out for any changes that are not normal for you:** You are more likely to survive cancer if you spot it at an early stage. Talk to your doctor if you notice anything unusual, such as pain, unusual bleeding or new symptoms that don't clear up after a few weeks.

See the next page of this leaflet for tips on how to reduce your risk of cancer in general.

## Can I be screened for lung cancer?

Testing for cancer when you have no symptoms is called screening. There is no lung cancer screening programme in Ireland at present. If you are worried or feel you may be at risk, talk to your GP.



# 12 ways to reduce your cancer risk



**Do not smoke**



**Avoid second-hand smoke**



**Be a healthy weight**



**Be physically active in everyday life**



**Have a healthy diet**



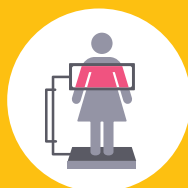
**Avoid alcohol**



**Avoid too much sun**



**Avoid pollutants**



**Get screened for cancer**



**Breastfeed your baby. Limit HRT**



**Get vaccinations - Hepatitis B for babies/HPV for older children**



**Find out if you are exposed to radon gas in your area. See [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)**

# Some facts about lung cancer

**9/10**

Smoking causes nearly 9 out of 10 lung cancers



The sooner you stop smoking, the more you reduce your risk



More people die from lung cancer than any other cancer

**40+**

Lung cancer usually affects people over the age of 40

**70**

The average age when a person is diagnosed is about 70



## How common is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in Ireland. Around 2,700 people are diagnosed with it every year.

# More information

If you are worried or have questions about lung cancer or any cancer:



**Call our Support Line**  
**Freephone 1800 200 700**



**Email [supportline@irishcancer.ie](mailto:supportline@irishcancer.ie)**  
We will provide you confidential advice, support and information.

Visit our Daffodil Centres where our nurses are on hand to provide advice and information on everything from local support groups to help with travel or financial problems. To find out where your local Daffodil Centre is, email [daffodilcentreinfo@irishcancer.ie](mailto:daffodilcentreinfo@irishcancer.ie)

Visit our website [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie) for more information on lung cancer and ways you can reduce your risk of cancer.

## Want to stop smoking?

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to reduce your risk of cancer.

If you would like advice or support on quitting, call the HSE Quit Team on CallSave **1800 201 203**, Freetext **QUIT** to **50100** or visit [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)