



# Understanding lung cancer

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**MARCELLE RUTH**  
CANCER CENTRE & SPECIALIST HOSPITAL

**The Marcelle Ruth Cancer Centre  
& Specialist Hospital is the first  
comprehensive healthcare centre of its  
kind in Nigeria and indeed West Africa.**

**> Our promise**

In everything we do, we believe that compassion and care make all the difference.

With vast experience and understanding, our specialist team uses the very latest technology and treatments to deliver the best outcomes possible.

From screening and diagnosis to treatment and ongoing support, we are committed to providing outstanding care to those in need.

# About this booklet

We understand it can be overwhelming for anyone to undergo cancer care, but we are here to provide you with help and support.

The focus of this leaflet is to help you and your family understand more about lung cancer.

# Lung cancer

Lung cancer occurs when abnormal cells divide in an uncontrolled way in the lung. It can start in the windpipe, the main airway or the lungs.

Lung cancer is more common in older people and in people with previous chest problems or lung diseases such as emphysema.

## Risk factors

- Smoking tobacco
- Chemicals such as asbestos, silica
- Air pollution
- Previous lung disease
- Exposure to radon gas
- Family history of lung cancer

## Symptoms

Lung cancer doesn't always cause symptoms in its early stages. However, most common symptoms include:

- having a cough most of the time
- getting out of breath doing the things you used to do without a problem
- coughing up phlegm (sputum) with blood in it
- having an ache or pain in the chest or shoulder
- chest infections that keep coming back
- loss of appetite
- feeling tired all the time
- losing weight.

Also, there are some types of lung cancer cells that produce hormones that go into the blood stream. These hormones can cause symptoms that don't seem related to the lung cancer and they are called paraneoplastic syndrome. These hormone symptoms might include:

- pins and needles or numbness in the fingers or toes
- muscle weakness
- drowsiness, weakness, dizziness and confusion
- breast swelling in men
- blood clots.

### **Pancoast tumour**

This is a very rare type of lung cancer growing right at the top of the lung. The most common symptom is severe shoulder pain, or pain that travels down the arm. It can also cause a collection of symptoms called Horner's syndrome. These include:

- drooping or weakness of one eyelid
- a small pupil in the same eye
- loss of sweating on one side of the face.

### **Diagnosis**

The following tests can help diagnose lung cancer and also check whether it has spread outside the lung. They include:

- chest x-ray
- CT scan
- MRI
- bronchoscopy – a test that looks at the inside of the breathing tubes in your lungs; if any areas look abnormal, biopsies can be taken
- endobronchial ultrasound
- endoscopic ultrasound, which can check whether lung cancer has spread into the lymph nodes of the chest
- biopsy
- abdominal ultrasound
- bone scan
- PET-CT scan.

## Stages, types and grades

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

The type tells which type of cell the cancer started from and the grade means how abnormal the cells look under the microscope.

Knowing the stage, type and grade of a cancer can help doctors plan your treatment.

## Treatment

Your treatment depends on the type of lung cancer, where it is, its size, whether it has spread and your general health.

The main treatments are chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery and chemoradiotherapy.

Others include photodynamic therapy – using a combination of a light-sensitising drug and very bright light to kill the cancer, laser therapy, microwave ablation, radiofrequency ablation and diathermy.



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