

Life after treatment for Lung Cancer

A guide for patients and their carers



Introduction

Treatment for Lung Cancer can be very varied depending on the stage and type of your cancer. It can include one or a variety of treatments given with different aims. The most common treatments we use are :

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy

Following your treatment you will be offered follow up clinic appointments to review how you are getting on and monitor the need for further treatment. During this time, it is likely that you will have less frequent visits to the hospital. This leaflet aims to highlight how you may feel during this period, symptoms to look out for and where you can access further information and support.

We hope you find this booklet helpful and would welcome any comments and suggestions for future editions.

How might I feel?

Life after treatment will vary depending on the extent of treatment you have received and how well you have coped with it. All treatments take time to recover from and this is likely to be gradual so don't expect too much of yourself. It is also very variable from one person to another. Bear in mind that you may not be as active as before, and following treatment you will need to build your strength and energy which can take a few weeks or months.

Commonly after treatment you may experience:

- Tiredness / fatigue
- Ongoing treatment specific side effects e.g. nausea (feeling sick)
- Reduced confidence
- Low in mood
- Loss of direction / loneliness

If you are worried about any ongoing concerns please discuss this with your GP, Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses or hospital team.

Looking forward

You may feel relieved and look forward to the end of the treatment or you may find this a difficult time, as it usually means less frequent contact with the hospital. It is important that you utilise this time away from the hospital to do things that you want to do and enjoy spending time with your friends and family. It may be helpful to think about your priorities and set realistic goals, it is often a good idea to have something to look forward to a few weeks or months after your treatment is over.

You may feel anxious about your cancer returning, over time this may reduce or it may become a part of everyday life. It is important that you discuss your fears with your GP, Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses or hospital team or and obtain extra support if you need it (see sources of support page 7).

Signs and symptoms to look out for

Many people like to know the type of things to look out for during this period. There may be specific symptoms related to your disease which you should be aware of. Your Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses or Consultant will be able to make you aware of these.

It is important not to panic or jump to conclusions about any symptoms. Many people with lung cancer develop symptoms which are unrelated to the cancer and can be explained by other medical reasons.

If you are worried about any symptoms speak to either your GP, Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses or hospital team. You could also request an earlier follow up appointment.

Signs and symptoms to look out for:

- Unexplained persistent breathlessness
- A persistent cough or a change in a longstanding cough
- Coughing up blood
- Repeat chest infections
- A pain anywhere which is persistent and /or becoming worse
- Unexplained persistent tiredness
- Unexplained persistent weight loss
- Changes in strength or sensation in arms and / or legs
- Neck / facial swelling
- Changes in bowel habit / passing urine
- Changes in mood / personality

If you have any of the signs or symptoms listed above, or **any other** symptoms causing you concern please discuss this with your GP, Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses a member of the hospital team looking after you.

Other information available

You can access further information booklets on life after cancer treatment from Macmillan Cancer Support or The Maggie's Centre at the Churchill Hospital.

Some of the booklets available are:

- Managing breathlessness
- Life after Cancer Treatment
- Exercise after Cancer Treatment
- The emotional effects of cancer
- Travel and cancer

People who you can talk to

If you would like to talk to someone about your cancer and / or treatment you could talk to:

- Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses.
- Community Nurses.
- Your local cancer information centre.

If you are worried about any new symptoms please contact your GP, Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses or hospital team as soon as possible or ask for your clinic follow up appointment to be brought forward.

Sources of support and information

Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses

Tel: 01865 226119

(9am to 4.30pm) and if answer phone, we endeavour to return calls on the same day but messages left after 3pm may not be returned until the next working day.

Community Palliative Care Nurses

Via GP or Lung Cancer Specialist Nurses

Community Nurses

Contact via GP surgery

Counselling services

Via GP / Hospital team

Maggie's Cancer Information Centre

Churchill Hospital 01865 225688/225690

<http://www.maggiescentres.org/>

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

Freephone: 0800 358 7200

www.roycastle.org

Oxfordshire Smoking Advice Service

Tel: 01865 226663

<http://www.smokefreeoxfordshire.nhs.uk/>

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 0000

www.macmillan.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

See local telephone directory

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Disabled Parking Scheme

Tel: 0845 050 7666

www.directgov.uk under 'Motoring'

Benefits Helpline Freephone:

Tel: 0800 88 2200

Mesothelioma UK (for patients with a mesothelioma diagnosis)

Tel: 0800 169 2409

www.mesothelioma.uk.com

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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Version 1, September 2012
Review date: September 2014
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
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www.ouh.nhs.uk/patientinformation