



Ask about your lung cancer medicines

Questions to help you get the best from
your chemotherapy and cancer medicines

Ask about your lung cancer medicines

This guide is to help you get the best from your treatment.

It has questions that you might like to ask the people treating you – your cancer doctors, nurses or hospital pharmacist. Of course you can ask them anything you like: these are just examples to help you. You can also use this booklet to write down other questions you might like to ask, as well as the answers you receive.

Don't feel that you have to ask all of your questions when you next see your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can always make another appointment, if you want to discuss things further.

If you need more information, you can contact:

CancerBACUP freephone helpline: 0808 800 1234
Open 9am – 8pm Monday to Friday

CancerBACUP website: www.cancerbacup.org.uk

Lung cancer can be treated in a number of different ways and there may be different options depending upon your type of lung cancer and how it is affecting you.

This leaflet is mainly about treatment for lung cancer using medicines, like chemotherapy, but lung cancer can also be treated with radiotherapy and sometimes surgery.

It is important that you are clear about what treatment means for you and how it might affect you. Your cancer doctor, the nurses and the pharmacist are there to help you.

Making decisions about treatment can sometimes be difficult. If you feel that you can't make a decision, ask more questions – or ask for more time to think about it.

This guide is divided into three sections, for different times during your cancer experience:

Thinking about treatment

Questions you can ask about your lung cancer treatment before you make any decisions about the best option for you

Choosing treatment

Questions you can ask when choosing the treatment that is best for you

Taking treatment

Questions you can ask once you've started having your treatment

Thinking

Questions you can ask about your lung cancer treatment before you make any decisions.

Questions like these may be difficult to ask and there may not always be a definite answer.

- What is the best way to treat my lung cancer?
- Is chemotherapy the best treatment for me?
Is chemotherapy better than surgery? Or radiotherapy?
- Are there any advantages to having a combination of treatments? Such as chemotherapy with radiotherapy, or with surgery?
- Are there any other drug treatments for lung cancer other than chemotherapy?
- Will the chemotherapy cure my lung cancer?
- What benefit will the chemotherapy give me?
- How much extra time will the chemotherapy give me?
- How likely is it that I will get any benefit from the treatment?
- Is it better to have treatment now or wait until I have symptoms?



TIP: It's a good idea to tell a health professional about any other medicines, remedies or supplements you are already taking.

Always check if you are not sure what terms like these mean, so that you can be sure that you understand the choices you have been offered.

- What do you mean by cancer stage?
- What is a primary cancer?
- What is a secondary cancer?
- What is remission?
- What is palliative treatment?

Sometimes it can feel awkward or embarrassing to ask about practical issues like these, but your cancer team will understand.

- Has my case been discussed at a team meeting where there was a surgeon and an oncologist (cancer specialist) present?
- Are there any financial costs to me? Will I have to pay for any prescriptions?
- Do I need any more tests before I start treatment?
- Do I have to have the treatment offered to me?
- What will happen if I don't have the treatment?
- Can I get a second opinion?
- Who can I contact if I have any questions?

Getting more information about your lung cancer and how it is treated can help you to feel more in control of the situation.

- Are there any national guidelines for lung cancer that I should be aware of? (see www.nice.org.uk and www.cancerbacup.org.uk)
- Where can I get more information about lung cancer and its treatment? (see www.askaboutmedicines.org)

Choosing

Questions you can ask when choosing the treatment that is best for you.

It is important to know all about the treatment so that you can make the right decision for you. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will be able to help you make these decisions.

- Can you tell me which chemotherapy drugs I will have?
- Will I have tablets? Injections? Drips?
- What are the possible risks/side effects of this chemotherapy?
- How likely is it that I will get these side effects?
- Are there any long-term side effects? What are they?
- Will the chemotherapy affect/damage my lungs? Will it make me short of breath?
- Will the possible benefits of the chemotherapy be worth the potential side effects?
- Could I have a different chemotherapy drug that might have fewer side effects?
- Can I have these drugs again if I need to?
- What is the aim of the chemotherapy?
- Will it help improve my symptoms? Pain? Breathlessness?
- Is this chemotherapy the best there is for my type of lung cancer? Are there other options that the NHS cannot afford to give me?

- How soon will I start?
- How long will the treatment last?
- How many courses of chemotherapy will I need?
- How often will I have chemotherapy?
- Can I change my mind after I've started?
- How will you know if the treatment is working?
- How does chemotherapy work?
- What does it mean to take part in a clinical trial?
- Do I have to take part in a trial I have been offered?

Getting answers to practical questions like these can help you organise your life to make things as easy as possible during treatment.

- Will I have my treatment at this hospital, or will I have to travel?
- Can I have my treatment at home?
- What effect will the treatment have on my daily life? Will I be able to continue to work? Can I still go on holiday?
- Will I be able to look after my family?
- Will the treatment affect my fertility or my sex life?
- Is there any help/support I can have at home?



TIP: Your cancer nurse can help you find financial support or help at home.

Taking

Questions you can ask once you've started taking or having your treatment.

It is good to know how your treatment works and how to take it safely.

- What does this treatment do?
- How long will I be on this treatment?
- Do I need to change my lifestyle when I am having this treatment? Can I drink alcohol? Do I need to change what I eat? Can I still exercise regularly?
- Can I use my inhaler with this chemotherapy?
- If my treatment is delayed, will this make a difference?

Sometimes there can be uncertainties about treatment.

- How will I know that the treatment has worked?
- When can I expect the treatment to make me feel better?
- How will the doctors know if the treatment is working?
- What happens if the treatment doesn't work?
- What will happen after the treatment is finished?

If you know what to expect from your treatment it can help you to cope.

- What are the side effects and how will they be controlled? What should I do if they happen to me?
- How long will the side effects last?
- If I am having lots of side effects can I stop my treatment?
- Are there any complementary therapies that might help?

It is a good idea to know who can help if you have any problems during your treatment.

- Who will be looking after me while I have my treatment?
- Does my GP know about my lung cancer and treatment?
- Who should I contact if I have any problems? How long should I wait before contacting them?
- Who should I contact in an emergency?



TIP: The CancerBACUP helpline is staffed by cancer nurses, 9am – 8pm, Monday to Friday.

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