What affects your risk?

Tobacco smoke
Smoking is the major cause of lung cancer and is linked to more than eight in ten cases in the UK. The good news is that when you quit smoking, your risk of developing lung cancer starts to go down. The damage caused by smoking builds up over time. As well as the amount you smoke, how long you smoke for has a strong impact on cancer risk. For example, smoking five cigarettes a day for 20 years is even worse for you than smoking 10 a day for 10 years. So the sooner you quit, the better.

There is good evidence that smokers are more likely to quit successfully if they get professional support. For help quitting call Quitline free on 0800 002200. Anyone can develop lung cancer. But people who smoke (or used to smoke) have a higher risk.

Smoking affects people around you too. Second-hand smoke can increase a non-smoker’s risk of developing lung cancer by about a quarter.

Age
Lung cancer is more common in older people. Three quarters of cases are in people aged 65 and over.

Chest problems
People who have had chronic bronchitis, emphysema (which are both forms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – COPD), pneumonia or tuberculosis have an increased risk of lung cancer.

Further information
For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit spotcancerearly.com
For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruk.org/cancer-help
If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at cruk.org/health
All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK
CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we’re all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call 0300 1231861 or visit our website cruk.org

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Busting lung cancer myths

Myth: Coughing up blood is the earliest sign of lung cancer.
Fact: Many people with lung cancer go to their doctor with other symptoms like a cough, shortness of breath, chest pain or unexplained weight loss. It’s important to see your doctor if you develop any of the symptoms in this leaflet.

Myth: Only cigarette smokers develop lung cancer.
Fact: In the UK, around one in 13 lung cancer deaths are in people who have never regularly smoked cigarettes.

Myth: Lung cancer cannot be cured.
Fact: When lung cancer is spotted at an early stage, the chances of surviving are much higher.

Myth: If you’ve smoked for many years, there’s no point giving up.
Fact: Quitting will reduce the risk of developing lung cancer and other diseases even for people who have been smoking for many years. It also increases the chances of responding better to treatment.

It is always worth giving up, no matter how long you have smoked.

What should you look out for?
If you notice any of these symptoms it is important to get them checked out:

- a cough that won’t go away
- a change in a cough you have had for a long time
- being short of breath
- blood in your phlegm
- a lasting chest and/or shoulder pain
- unexplained tiredness
- unexplained weight loss.

Some of these symptoms are very common and may not be caused by cancer. But you’ve got nothing to lose by getting them checked out. If they are serious, you could have everything to gain. Spotting cancer at an early stage can make a real difference – it could save your life.

Anyone can develop lung cancer, so it is best to see your doctor if you have any of these signs and symptoms or notice any other problems with your chest.

Lung cancer facts
Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in the UK. Anyone can develop lung cancer, but some people have a higher risk than others. Smoking is the main cause of the disease.

When lung cancer is found at an early stage, there is a better chance of successful treatment. So spotting cancer early can make a real difference.

In this leaflet you can find out about what symptoms to look out for and why it is important to get them checked out.

If anybody has any signs or symptoms that they are worried about, just go to your doctor. I’m sure I wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t gone to my doctor.

Ann Long, lung cancer survivor

I feel as if I’ve been given a second chance.

JIM RICHARDSON
Lung cancer survivor

I started smoking at 16 purely because it was considered cool. My friends thought it was odd if you didn’t smoke. I was on about 20 a day.

Forty years after my first cigarette, I faced the toughest day of my life, telling my children I had lung cancer. I was devastated at the thought that I might not see my three grandchildren growing up.

My prognosis was pretty poor, but I began chemotherapy treatment immediately, followed by radiotherapy. To my absolute joy and gratitude the treatment seems to be working and I feel as if I’ve been given a second chance.