



Why am I coughing?

Coughing is a common and distressing symptom for lung cancer patients. It can often be a symptom of lung cancer which affects many areas of life. It can affect your sleeping pattern causing severe tiredness, loss of appetite, pain, anxiety and sometimes can cause loss of control over passing urine. Your cough may be dry (called non-productive) or you may cough up phlegm (called a productive or moist cough).

What can be done to help my cough?

Your cancer doctor or lung cancer nurse specialist will assess how often you are coughing and if there are situations or times of the day when your cough is worse. Treatments to help your cough will depend on many factors and your hospital team can advise you.

Tips to help your cough:

- If you have a dry cough, try to increase your oral intake of fluid, preferably with water.
- Drinking warm honey and water and sucking on sweets or lozenges will also help.
- Try breathing in steam from hot water - add some herbal drops to the water.
- A cough linctus or cough suppressant can be prescribed by your GP.

What can help me when I am coughing up phlegm?

If you are coughing up phlegm, sitting in an upright position will help you cough better. Coughing will only move phlegm from your upper airways. It can be difficult to clear it from your lungs. Ask your physiotherapist for advice on breathing techniques to help with this.

If you are dehydrated the phlegm in your lungs may become sticky and can be difficult to cough up. You should drink around 6 – 8 glasses of water a day. If you dislike drinking water try adding diluting juice to flavour the water.

I have coughed up some blood in my phlegm. What does this mean?

Some patients with lung cancer will cough up blood. This is called haemoptysis (he-mop-ti-sis) and can be very distressing. It can be caused by a bleed in the blood vessels in the lung, an infection or clot in the lung. It is important to tell your cancer doctor or lung cancer nurse specialist about this and further investigations or treatment can be given. If there is a change in the colour of your phlegm, it may be due to an infection and you may be prescribed antibiotics.



GIVING HELP AND HOPE

The charity has two aims:

Supporting people living with lung cancer - Working closely with lung cancer nurses, we provide information, run lung cancer support groups and offer telephone and online support. Our patient grants offer some financial help to people affected by lung cancer.

Saving lives - We fund lung cancer research, campaign for better treatment and care for people who have lung cancer, and raise awareness of the importance of early diagnosis. Our lung cancer prevention work helps people to quit smoking and encourages young people not to start smoking.

Call us on 0333 323 7200 (option 2)

This information has been taken from the following sources:
Lung cancer—answering your questions: Managing lung cancer symptoms 2014