

Fluid in the lining of the lungs (pleural effusion)

My doctor says I have fluid on my lungs. What is this?

In some patients with lung cancer, fluid can build up between the sheets of tissue (called pleura) that cover the outside of the lung and the lining of the chest cavity. This is called a pleural effusion. The fluid stops the lung from fully expanding when you breathe. As it builds up, the collected fluid can sometimes cause shortness of breath, coughing and some chest pain.

What will help me?

Your hospital doctor can usually drain the fluid by inserting a tube, called a chest drain, into your chest. You will be given a local anaesthetic and won't feel any pain. Your hospital doctor will then make a small cut in the chest and insert the chest drain into the space where the fluid is collecting. An ultrasound scan will be used to help guide the tube into the correct position. The chest drain is then attached to a bag or bottle to collect the fluid. The fluid will be drained off slowly, to avoid complications as your lungs re-expand. You may feel dizzy, sick or light-headed. You will be given an x-ray to check that your lung has re-expanded and the drain can be removed.

Once the local anaesthetic wears off, you may have some pain. You can be given painkillers to help with the pain. You will usually need to stay in hospital for a couple of days after the procedure.

To stop the fluid from building up again, a procedure called a pleurodesis (plu-roe-dee-sis) can be performed. The hospital doctor will inject a sterile talc solution through the drainage tube, into the space between the tissues covering your lungs. Sometimes the fluid does come back and you will need to have it drained again. Sometimes, a permanent drain will be necessary to drain fluid from around the lungs. This is called an indwelling pleural catheter and will avoid the need for repeated chest tube insertion every time the fluid collects. You will be shown how to drain the fluid, so that either you, a relative or friend can drain the fluid at home. Alternatively, a district nurse will be able to do this for you.

Managing lung cancer symptoms

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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.

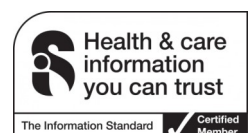
Call us on 0333 323 7200 (option 2)

This information has been taken from the following sources:

Lung cancer—answering your questions: **Managing lung cancer symptoms 2014**

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Date produced: July 2014

Reg. Charity England and Wales No: 1046854
Scotland No: SC037596.



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