



How will I feel when I get home?

Following your operation it is normal to have feelings of stress, anxiety or depression. Being affected emotionally is normal. It may help to talk about how you feel with a member of your family, a friend or your nurse specialist. Sometimes your friends and family need to talk things over as well.

It helps if you are able to set yourself realistic achievable goals so that you can see that you are moving forward. It helps you to think positively. Most of us have at one time experienced the power of the mind over the body. Relaxation may be helpful as you can train the mind to relax the body. This may reduce the stress and anxiety you feel. One relaxation technique is to learn to breathe more deeply and slowly. You may have already been taught this.

Here are some general relaxation guidelines:

- Choose a place and time where you will not be disturbed for at least 15-20 minutes.
- Practice your chosen technique at least twice daily (minimum four times a week).
- It may take a few weeks before you notice any benefit – stick with it and do not expect instant success.
- Relaxation should be helpful. If you find it makes you more anxious or increases your pain, speak to your nurse specialist who may be able to suggest other methods of reducing your symptoms.

Please see our Living with lung cancer booklet for more information on relaxation, guided imagery and complementary therapies. Visit www.roycastle.org/ayqpack or call our free helpline on **0333 323 7200 (option 2)**.

How should I look after my wound?

Try not to touch your wounds: if you do there is more chance of infection. Use a mirror or get a member of your family to check your wound(s) every day. If your wound is clean and dry it should be left without a dressing. This will help it to heal more quickly. Don't worry about the scabs, they will fall off in their own time. You will usually have at least one stitch where your drains were placed that should be removed by the practice nurse at your GP surgery. The stitches should be removed around seven days after drain removal. Some swelling around the wound is perfectly normal and should go down after a few weeks. You should consult your GP for advice if your wound becomes red and inflamed, if you have pain from around the wound, or if fluid is coming from the wound.



I need to go home with a chest drain - how do I look after it?

If you need to go home with a chest drain it will be because a small amount of fluid is still draining into the bag or you have a small air leak caused by the internal wounds taking a while to heal. You will not be sent home with a drain unless the doctors and nurses are sure that you are able and confident to care for a drain. If you live alone and do not have anyone to support you, tell the nurses on the ward. A district nurse will be asked to visit you every few days. They will check the drain and change the dressing if necessary. The doctors and nurse specialist may want to see you approximately one week after you have gone home to see whether the drain needs to be removed. They will want to know how much fluid has drained each day. It is a good idea to record the drainage every night and then empty the bag to prevent spillage. Here are some simple rules for you to remember:

DO

- Empty your bag before you go to bed each night.
- Record the amount and colour.
- Continue to exercise.
- Follow and read the instructions you will have been given.
- Get advice if your breathing becomes difficult.
- Contact the ward you were on or your nurse specialist if you are worried.

DON'T

- Disconnect your drain.
- Pull at the drain or the stitches.
- Allow the bag to lay flat as it may spill.
- Block the port for emptying the bag.
- Forget that the bag is connected to you!

Will I be able to look after myself?

You will be able generally to care for yourself, for example, washing and dressing. You will probably be most comfortable in loose fitting clothing (ladies - bras may be uncomfortable for a little while). You may have a bath or a shower but do not scrub the wound or use perfumed products. Although you will be able to cook, don't lift heavy pots and pans. Ready meals are often ideal for the first few days after going home. You may have a reduced appetite and may even lose some weight. Try to eat small meals often that are high in calories. Light dusting is fine but avoid vacuuming or moving heavy objects.



TOP TIP

For the first few nights after you come home from hospital, you may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up in bed with extra pillows.

How long do I need to wear stockings for after surgery?

You will have been given special stockings to wear following surgery. These help to improve your circulation and help prevent blood clots developing in your legs (DVT or Deep Vein Thrombosis). You should wear the stockings until you have returned to your normal level of activity. Tell your healthcare team if you have difficulty putting on/taking off the stockings. Your healthcare team will confirm how long you should wear them for. You should remove the stockings when you go to bed at night and wash them. They will then be ready for use in the morning.

How do I improve my posture and shoulder movement?

Try and maintain an upright position. Check your posture in the mirror and keep your shoulders moving. Gentle side stretches away from the operated side may help your posture. If problems with your shoulder or posture persist it may be that you will need a referral to your physiotherapist. Your GP should be able to help you with this.

Will I be able to get out and about?

The amount of activity you can do (both in the short term and the long term) will depend on a number of factors, including the type of operation you have had. You may feel that you lack confidence for a few days after you go home – this is normal. Your confidence will soon return. Try to get a balance between activity and rest. It is important that you try to remain active.

Do not stay in bed. Even if sat upright in bed, your lungs do not expand properly and the risk of complications such as chest infection increases. Get up and go to bed at your normal time. Have an afternoon nap if required, but no more than one hour.

Aim to take a walk once or twice a day. Gradually increase the distance you can walk. Cold weather will not cause you any harm. You can also go shopping with your family and friends - lean on the trolley if it helps.



How will I be followed up?

Following discharge you will usually be sent an appointment by the hospital. This will vary from one hospital to another but is usually two to six weeks after discharge. At this appointment, you may have a chest x-ray and your wounds checked to see they are healing. You will be given the results of your operation. You may be referred to a cancer doctor if further treatment is needed. You will need to be followed up long term following your lung cancer operation. This is called lung cancer surveillance and is important as even though the operation may have been a complete success there is still unfortunately a chance your lung cancer may come back. Your follow up will vary depending on your hospital's local policy but will involve clinic appointments with a chest x-ray over a period of five years. It may be with your surgeon, your cancer doctor if you had further treatment such as chemotherapy after the surgery or with respiratory doctors who have looked after you.

In the first year you will normally be seen every three months and you may have a CT scan at or near the end of the first year. In the second year you will be seen every six months and then annually after that for a total of five years. After five years the risk of the lung cancer coming back is low and so you will be discharged.

Can I stop the lung cancer coming back?

Try and stay as healthy as possible by keeping active, watching your weight and eating a healthy and balanced diet. If you are or have been a smoker, the most important thing to reduce your chances of having the lung cancer return is not to continue to smoke.

Will I have any side-effects from the surgery?

Surgery for lung cancer is a serious operation and most people have side-effects of one sort or another. Side-effects vary from person to person and may depend on the type of lung cancer surgery you have had.

Side effect	Practical advice
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Breathlessness	This will depend on the type of surgery you had and your general fitness level before your surgery. Some shortness of breath is to be expected and is normal. When you are up and about you may feel more breathless. This is normal and shows that you are working hard enough. You may have to adapt your lifestyle to cope with longer term breathlessness.
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Constipation	You may find your bowel habit is altered. You may become constipated because of the change in eating habits or the painkillers you are taking. Eating two or three pieces of fruit and vegetables a day can help with constipation. Ask your GP or your nurse specialist for advice.
Cough	If you had a chronic cough before surgery, this may continue but if the cough was caused by the tumour, it may get better. You may find that you cough up some mucous and sometimes blood which can collect in the airways after a lung operation. If this does not go away after you are discharged, ask your GP or your nurse specialist for advice.
Numbness	Numbness is common, particularly around the front of the chest, the scar and the drain sites. This may ease with time although some numbness, due to nerve damage, may be permanent.
Pain	It is normal to feel occasional shooting or stabbing pains as the nerves and tissues damaged at the time of surgery begin to repair themselves. Some people describe a heavy or tight feeling in the chest area. It is very important to take your pain relief as prescribed. Paracetamol works well if taken regularly (two tablets four times a day). Any pain due to your surgery should ease with time. If you feel that the pain tablets you are taking are not controlling any pain ask your GP or your nurse specialist for advice.
Weight loss/ change of appetite	It is quite common to lose some weight after the operation, this is due to the physical demands of going through a major operation, the natural emotional reaction and worry around the time of the surgery. Many patients following the surgery lose or have a change of appetite and sometimes food will taste different. Try eating small meals that contain more calories than you normally eat. With time your appetite should return to normal and you will return to your normal weight.



“When I was recovering from my operation I made sure that I took regular pain relief – whether I felt I needed it or not. This kept my pain under control, which meant that I could start moving around easily and helped me to get better.”

Lyn

Please see our *Managing lung cancer symptoms* booklet for detailed information on coping with breathlessness, constipation, coughing, pain management, tiredness and other common side-effects for lung cancer and treatments. Visit www.roycastle.org/ayqpack or call our free helpline on **0333 323 7200 (option 2)**.

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: Surgery for lung cancer 2014