

Lung Cancer

Introduction

Lung cancer is the most common cancer in the world. In the UK there are around 39,000 people diagnosed with a lung cancer each year making it the second most common cancer after breast cancer.

Some facts about the incidence of Lung Cancer:

- It is estimated that, at any one time, there are 65,000 people in the UK living with lung cancer.
- More than 17,900 women were diagnosed with lung cancer in the UK in 2008, making it the third most common cancer in women after breast and bowel cancer.
- Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in men after prostate cancer, with more than 22,800 new cases diagnosed in the UK in 2008.
- More than 8 in 10 lung cancer cases occur in people aged 60 and over.
- Scotland has one of the highest rates of lung cancer in the world.
- In the 1950s, for every lung cancer case diagnosed in women in the UK, there were 6 in men. That ratio is now 3 cases in women for every 4 in men.
- Worldwide, the highest rates of lung cancer are seen in men in Central and Eastern Europe and in women in Northern America. The lowest incidence rates are in Middle African countries.

Symptoms

The symptoms of lung cancer can include any of the following:

- a persistent cough, or change in a long-standing cough
- a chest infection that doesn't get better with treatment
- Shortness of breath
- coughing up blood-stained phlegm
- a dull ache, or a sharp pain, when you cough or take a deep breath
- unexplained loss of appetite and weight loss
- difficulty swallowing
- fatigue

The above symptoms may well be due to other causes, however If you have any of these symptoms, you should see your GP.

Lung cancer causes and prevention

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer. More than 8 out of 10 cases (83%) are diagnosed in smokers. Pipe and cigar smokers have a lower risk of developing lung cancer than cigarette smokers but are still at far greater risk than non-smokers. Passive smoking (breathing in other people's cigarette smoke) increases the risk of lung cancer but the risk is still much less than in smokers.

Although smoking is the main cause of lung cancer, there are other factors that increase the risk of developing lung cancer disease, for example, exposure to radon gas, air pollution, exposure to certain chemicals, previous lung disease, family history of lung cancer, past cancer treatment.

If a person stops smoking the risk of lung cancer is greatly reduced. After about 15 years the chances of developing the disease are similar to that of a non-smoker.

As with all cancers a healthy lifestyle is seen as a significant factor in the fight against the disease. Exercise and a balanced diet rich in fruit and vegetables can help you to stay healthy.

Sources of Guidance and Advice

This information is sourced from the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, Cancer Help UK and Macmillan Cancer Support. For further information about lung cancer please see the links below.

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation is the only charity in the UK wholly dedicated to the defeat of lung cancer. The charity funds lung cancer research, provide support, help people to quit smoking and give a voice to all those affected by lung cancer through its campaign work.

Website: www.roycastle.org

Helpline: 0800 358 7200

Cancer Help UK

Cancer Help UK is one of 5 websites run by Cancer Research UK and provides a free information service and cancer care for people with cancer and their families. The Cancer Help UK Helpline is staffed by Specialist Nurses and lines are open from Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm.

Website: <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org/>

Telephone: 0808 800 4040 (freephone)

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan Cancer Support is one of the largest British charities and provides specialist health care, information and financial support to people affected by

cancer. If you have any questions about cancer, need support or just someone to talk to, call the Macmillan team free (Monday to Friday 9am-8pm).

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 00 00 (freephone)