

COVID-19 and lung cancer symptoms – know the difference.



GLOBAL LUNG CANCER
COALITION

Referrals for lung cancer have fallen during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the overlapping symptoms of cough, breathlessness and fatigue that can be present in both lung cancer and a COVID-19 infection. While some symptoms can be the same for both, there are some important differences and it is important to know when to seek further help so the correct diagnosis is made.

Features that could suggest a COVID-19 infection

If you experience flu-like symptoms for one to two weeks, with breathing difficulties from days seven to ten, this could indicate a COVID-19 infection. Symptoms would include:

- a dry cough
- breathlessness
- fever or high temperature (above 38°C / 100.4°F)
- muscle aches and pains (myalgia)
- loss of sense of smell
- loss of sense of taste

If you have any of the above symptoms, it could be that you have a COVID-19 infection and you should arrange to be tested as soon as possible. Follow local guidelines on how to arrange a COVID-19 test. You and anyone you live with must stay at home until you have been tested and you have received your result.

If your COVID-19 test is **positive**:

- follow local guidelines on self-isolating to avoid passing on the COVID-19 infection to others
- contact your health care professional if your symptoms get worse or do not go away

If your COVID-19 test is **negative**:

- stay home until you are feeling better

If anyone you live with has symptoms of a COVID-19 infection, but you have tested negative, you should remain home until they have a negative COVID-19 test or follow local guidelines.

Features that could suggest either COVID-19 or lung cancer

Some symptoms of a COVID-19 infection and lung cancer overlap and may need further investigation. These symptoms include:

- an unexplained cough that does not go away (you may be unsure when it started)
- unexplained breathlessness that does not go away (you may be unsure when it started)
- flu-like symptoms lasting longer than three weeks
- feelings of tightness in the chest
- difficulty in taking deep breaths
- fatigue (low energy) that does not go away

If you experience any of the above symptoms, you should arrange to be tested for a COVID-19 infection as soon as possible. Follow local guidelines on how to arrange a COVID-19 test.

If your COVID-19 test is **positive**:

- follow local guidelines on self-isolating to avoid passing on the COVID-19 infection to others
- contact your health care professional if your symptoms get worse or do not go away

If your COVID-19 test is **negative**:

- self-isolate according to local guidelines
- contact your health care professional if your symptoms get worse or do not go away after 14 days, and they will arrange further tests

Features that could suggest lung cancer

Some symptoms of a COVID-19 infection can also be symptoms of lung cancer, including:

- an unexplained cough that does not go away and lasts for more than three weeks
- unexplained breathlessness that does not go away and lasts for more than three weeks
- fatigue (low energy) lasting longer than four weeks
- a chest infection that does not go away or comes back
- coughing up blood (haemoptysis)
- chest pain
- weight loss
- loss of appetite

If you experience any of these symptoms, it could be a sign of lung cancer. Contact your health care professional as soon as possible and they may arrange further tests.



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This information leaflet has been produced by the Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC) secretariat and reviewed by lung cancer experts. For more information on the support and information services available in your country, visit www.lungcancercoalition.org Version 1.0 – January 2021.