

# Lung cancer

What you should know



Marie Keating

FOUNDATION

making cancer less frightening by enlightening

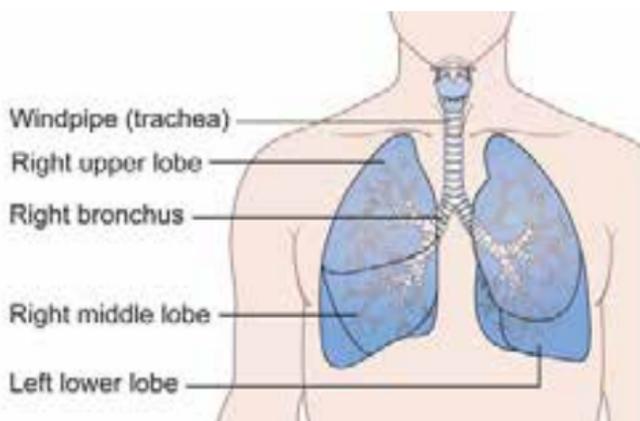
# lung cancer

## the facts

- Lung cancer is the fourth most common cancer in Ireland
- Almost 2,700 cases are diagnosed each year
- Sadly, more Irish men and women die from lung cancer than any other type of cancer
- Anyone can develop lung cancer, but some people have a higher risk than others
- Smoking is the main cause of the disease
- Survival rates for lung cancer have increased from 8% in 1994 to 24% in more recent years
- When lung cancer is found at an early stage, there is a better chance of successful treatment

## The lungs

The lungs are a vital organ in our body, located in our chest. We each have two lungs, which are cone shaped breathing organs that bring oxygen into our body and release carbon dioxide. Each lung is made up of lobes. The left lung has two lobes and the right lung has three. A thin membrane called the pleura surrounds the lungs. Lungs are protected by the rib-cage. Beneath the lungs is a dome shaped muscle called the diaphragm. This works with the lungs, allowing us to breathe air in and out.



## Causes and risk factors

- **Age** - Lung cancer is more common in older people.
- **Smoking** - This is the cause of most cases of lung cancer. The more you smoke, the more likely you are to get lung cancer. However, as soon as you stop smoking the risk of lung cancer starts to decrease. If you can quit smoking for 28 days you are 5 times more likely to quit for good.
- **Passive smoking** - Breathing other people's cigarette smoke increases the risk of lung cancer but the risk is still much less than if you smoke yourself.
- **Chest problems** - People who have had chronic bronchitis, emphysema, pneumonia or tuberculosis have an increased risk of lung cancer.
- **Exposure to radon** - This natural gas can be found in the air or trapped in buildings. It increases the risk, especially in smokers.
- **Exposure to asbestos and some chemicals**

## What to look out for

The symptoms of lung cancer may include

- Having a cough most of the time
- A change in a cough you have had for a long time
- Being short of breath
- Coughing up phlegm (sputum) with signs of blood in it
- An ache or pain in the shoulders or chest when breathing or coughing
- Unexplained loss of appetite
- Unexplained tiredness (fatigue)
- Unexplained weight loss

**Some of these symptoms are very common and may not be caused by cancer, but you should see your GP to be sure. Knowing you have lung cancer at an early stage could save your life.**

## How lung cancer is diagnosed

If you experience any of the listed symptoms, see your GP. He or she will examine you and arrange for you to have tests. You may need to be referred to hospital for these tests. A chest x-ray will be taken to check for any abnormalities in your lungs. You may also be asked to give a sample of phlegm (sputum), so that it can be examined under the microscope for cancer cells- this is known as sputum cytology.

You may also have a bronchoscopy and/or a CT scan. A bronchoscopy is a thin flexible tube that is passed down your throat and into the lungs to examine them. The CT scan uses x-rays to build up a three dimensional picture of the inside of your body.

## Primary or secondary lung cancer

There is an important difference between primary and secondary lung cancer. Primary lung cancer is a cancer that starts in the lungs. Secondary lung cancer is a cancer that has started somewhere else in the body, for example cancer of the breast or bowel, and spreads to the lungs.

## Types of lung cancer

There are two main types of primary lung cancer: small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer. The two types respond to treatment very differently.

## Treatment for lung cancer

Your doctors will plan your treatment by taking into account a number of things including your general health and the size and position of the tumour. The stage of the tumour is very important in determining treatment, which may be surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy.

Don't be afraid to ask your doctor or nurse any questions that you might have about your treatment.

## Quit smoking to reduce your risk

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland. If you are a smoker, speak to your doctor or pharmacist today for advice on how to quit. You can also call the National Smoker's Quitline for free on 1800 201 203 or FREETEXT QUIT to 50100.

**Watch a video about why you should stop smoking at [www.mariekeating.ie/your-health-your-choice](http://www.mariekeating.ie/your-health-your-choice)**

### 10 tips to help you quit

1. Prepare to quit – Write down your reasons for quitting and keep them close at hand.
2. Make a date to quit – And stick to it.
3. Support – Ask your family and friends for support.
4. Change your routine and plan ahead – Replace or change activities that you associate with smoking.
5. Be active – Regular activity is good for your health and helps you to manage stress.
6. Think positive – You may have withdrawal symptoms. These are positive signs that your body is recovering from the harmful effects of smoking. They will disappear.
7. Learn to deal with cravings – Try distracting yourself, having some water or taking some deep breaths.
8. Save money – Set aside money that you would otherwise spend on tobacco for a reward.
9. Watch what you eat – If you are worried about putting on weight, be careful about what you eat.
10. Take one day at a time – Remember, every day without smoking is good news for your health, your family and your pocket. If you slip-up, all is not lost. Set a new date and start again.

Tips are courtesy of the HSE Quit programme.

### **The health benefits begin the minute you stop smoking.**

Within 20 minutes your circulation will improve, and your blood pressure and heart rate will get lower. This immediately reduces your risk of a heart attack. Within eight hours, the carbon monoxide level in your blood will go down and the oxygen level will go up. After 48 hours, the nicotine and carbon monoxide have left your body. Your sense of smell and taste will start to improve. After 2-3 months, your lung capacity could increase by up to 30%. Within one year, your chance of having a heart attack drops by half.

## About the Marie Keating Foundation

Following their mother Marie's death in 1998, the Keating family promised that they would do everything they could to bring an end to cancer. They committed to provide everyone and their families with the necessary information to prevent cancer or detect it at its earliest stages and give support to patients through every stage of their cancer journey. The Foundation's mission is to "make cancer less frightening by enlightening".

- If you are worried or have any questions about cancer you can email our Ask the Nurse service on our website for confidential advice and support
- If you are experiencing financial difficulty as a result of a cancer diagnosis please email [info@mariekeating.ie](mailto:info@mariekeating.ie) to ask about our Comfort Fund
- If you would like to hear about our Survive & Thrive workshop programmes or seminars, which support cancer survivors to adjust to life after cancer, please check out our website
- To inquire about our mobile information services or to book a visit from a Marie Keating Foundation nurse visit our website
- For more information on skin cancer and melanoma visit [www.mariekeating.ie](http://www.mariekeating.ie)

*On February 2nd 1998, our mother Marie died from breast cancer. At the time and all through her illness, we could do nothing to help our Mother who had, all our lives, done everything for us. We, the Keating family have set up this charity in her name to try to help and prevent others going through what Mam went through and what we are still going through to this day. This is also to show that such a wonderful mother and person did not die in vain.*

Take care,

*The Keating Family*



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