

Getting ready for treatment for people with lung cancer

Prehabilitation

- Nutrition
- Physical fitness
- Psychological wellbeing

Prehabilitation or 'Prehab' for people with lung cancer?

This information leaflet has been written for people who will be having treatment for lung cancer.

What is prehabilitation (or prehab)?

It means preparing for treatment by improving your:

- Physical fitness
- Nutrition
- Psychological wellbeing.

Why do it?

It can help you to:

- Improve how well you cope with the side effects of treatment
- It can help to improve your recovery
- Feel more in control.

What do I need to do?

- Read through this booklet
- Take advantage of the information and support that is being offered
- Use the next few weeks to get ready for your treatment.

Nutrition

Lung cancer and its treatments may affect how well you are able to eat and maintain your weight.

You can help yourself be prepared for treatment by using the next few weeks to make sure your body is as well-nourished as it can be.

By keeping well-nourished you will be able to:

- Reduce the risk of infections
- Maintain your strength and energy levels
- Help to maintain your quality of life
- Cope better with your treatment.

What should I eat and drink to prepare for treatment?

There are no special foods that you should eat and no foods that you need to avoid. Have a good, balanced diet based on foods you enjoy and try to follow the guidelines below:

- Eat a diet high in energy (calories) and aim to maintain your weight.
- Eat a diet that is high in protein. Aim to include good sources of protein with every meal. High protein foods include:
 - meat
 - fish
 - dairy such as cheese, milk and yogurt
 - eggs
 - pulses such as lentils, beans, chickpeas
 - Quorn, tofu and other soya protein foods and drinks
 - nuts and seeds.

- Aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Examples of a portion include three tablespoons of a vegetable, a medium-sized fruit, a handful of grapes or a small glass of fruit juice.
- Include carbohydrates such as rice, bread, cereals, potatoes in your diet to provide energy and fibre.
- Have desserts and extra snacks between meals if you need them to maintain your weight or need to gain weight.
- Aim to drink at least 1.5 litres (3 pints) of fluid a day. This can include water, squash, tea, coffee, herbal or milky drinks.
- It may be useful to prepare for treatment by stocking up on ready prepared meals and snacks as you may have days when you will not feel up to preparing food.

Please speak to your Lung Cancer Specialist Nurse Team if you are struggling with eating or maintaining your weight as you may need to be referred to a specialist dietitian.

What should I do if I have diabetes?

If you have diabetes, the side effects of treatment can disrupt your blood glucose levels. You may need to monitor your blood glucose more often and you may need adjustments to any diabetes medications you take. To prepare for treatment, please contact your diabetes nurse or GP to discuss the best way to manage your diabetes during treatment.

Physical Fitness

It is important that you prepare for treatment by using the next few weeks to make sure you are as physically fit as possible. This does not mean that you need to train for a marathon: any improvements to your current level of fitness will help.

By taking control and improving your fitness you will be able to:

- Minimise loss of muscle mass and strength
- Have more energy
- Maintain your quality of life
- Recover more quickly.

How can I improve my physical fitness?

There is specialist support available to you free of charge to help you improve your fitness. We encourage everyone, no matter what your current level of fitness is, to take advantage of this.

The **Brighter Outlook** programme is run by Brighton and Hove Albion Foundation and offers free physical activity to anyone living in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove who has been diagnosed with cancer.

They offer one-to-one support and group-based physical activity classes. This can be face to face or online as to your preference. They will design a programme of exercises for you to complete independently, taking into account your needs, level of fitness, stage of treatment and exercise preferences. Ask your lung cancer specialist nurse for a referral to Brighter Outlook, or if you prefer you can self-refer using the form on their website on the back page of this booklet.

All types of physical activity will help you to improve or maintain your fitness, your strength and your overall wellbeing.

Here are some more suggestions:

- Continue to do activities that you enjoy, for some that might be a run or cycle, for others it might be a gentle walk or yoga class.
- The **Macmillan Horizon Centre** runs a variety of activity sessions you can do face to face or online.
- There are many fitness videos online that you can do at home. The NHS has a selection of different types of exercise sessions at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio>
- Stay active around the house with daily activities such as housework, gardening, vacuuming, climbing the stairs.

Should I stop smoking?

Yes. Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do to improve your health and it will help you to cope with effects of treatment.

Stopping smoking can feel overwhelming, especially if you have smoked for a long time, but getting the right support gives you the best chance of quitting.

Your GP or local pharmacist can provide help to stop smoking. The **NHS Quit Smoking** web page gives advice about stopping smoking and will find your local Stop Smoking Service when you enter your postcode. There is also an NHS Quit Smoking app to help you. **The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation** also provide support called **Quit Support**.

Controlling symptoms of lung cancer

Lung cancer can cause symptoms such as breathlessness, cough or pain. Please speak to your hospital doctor, your GP or your Lung Cancer Specialist Nurse Team if you are struggling with any symptoms and they will be able to advise you.

Psychological Wellbeing

It is usual for people to experience many different emotions when they have cancer, and it can feel difficult to cope with. It is common to feel anxious, afraid, angry, numb and often all these emotions.

The Macmillan Horizon Centre has a wide range of physical and emotional wellbeing services such as complimentary therapies which all patients can access.

Some people find meditation apps like **Headspace** or **Calm** helpful for symptoms such as insomnia and anxiety. **Big Health** is a free app which provides mental health support for people diagnosed with cancer.

Please talk to your Lung Cancer Nurse Specialist Team if you are struggling to cope. They can refer you for specialist counselling if needed.

Other support

If you would like to chat to someone who has gone through a similar experience, there is a **Lung Cancer Support Group** which is held the first Tuesday every month 6 pm – 7.30 pm at the **Macmillan Horizon Centre**. Alternatively, you could contact the **Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation** to find out about other lung cancer support groups.

Financial Advice

You may also have practical concerns for example about your work or finances. Please talk to your Lung Cancer Nurse Specialist Team if you would like to be referred to the Benefits Advice Team at the **Macmillan Horizon Centre**.

Useful Information

- **Macmillan Horizon Centre** (opposite the Sussex Cancer Centre at the Royal Sussex County Hospital)
www.macmillan.org.uk/horizoncentre
Tel: **01273 468770** or Email: horizoncentre@macmillan.org.uk
- **Macmillan Support Line**
on **0808 808 0000** seven days a week 8 am to 8 pm. They offer emotional support, cancer information and financial advice.
- **Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation** for information and support
www.roycastle.org.uk
Tel: **0333 323 7200** or Email: info@roycastle.org
- **Brighter Outlook**
<https://albioninthecommunity.org.uk/community-wellbeing/supporting-your-wellbeing/living-with-cancer/>
- **The Olive Tree Cancer Support Centres** for information and support to people in Crawley and Horsham
<https://www.olivetrecancersupport.org.uk>
- **NHS Quit Smoking**
<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking>
- **Surrey and Sussex Cancer Alliance**
Health and Wellbeing Top Tip Videos can be found on:
<https://surreyandsussexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/patients-and-public/health-and-wellbeing>

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath

Ref. number: 2302

Publication date: 11/2023

Review date: 11/2026

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer:
The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.