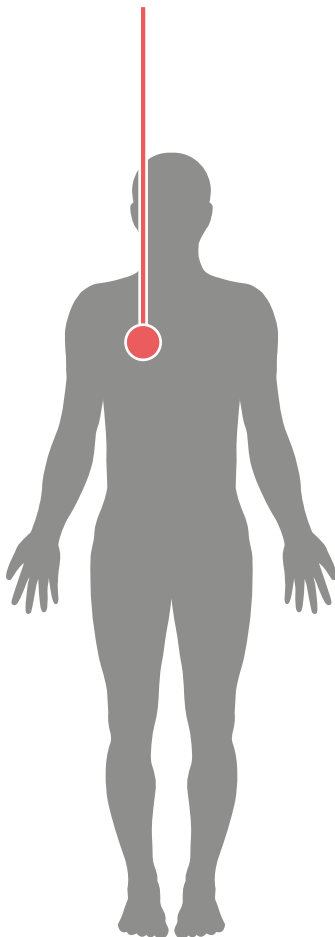


Get Well Soon

Helping you to make a speedy recovery after surgery to have part or all of a lung removed

Lung Resection



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This leaflet is a guide to recovering from an operation to remove part or all of a lung. It does not provide specific medical advice or diagnosis. Nor does it give advice about whether you should consent to an operation. All of these matters depend on individual medical advice from your consultant surgeon based on your own health, medical condition, and personal circumstances.

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Who this leaflet is for

Print instructions:

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To print only one page, select the page number you want in your print menu, usually under 'options' or 'preferences' depending on the printer type.

To save ink, select the 'draft' option.

This leaflet is for anyone who is recovering from, or is about to undergo surgery to have part or all of one of their lungs removed.

The technical term for your operation is a lung resection, which is how your surgeon and other health professionals who are helping you may refer to it.

Knowing what to expect after the operation can help you to make a quicker recovery and get back to enjoying the best possible quality of life. In the pages that follow, you'll find information that will help you to do that.

The advice in this leaflet offers broad guidelines for people who do not have any complications with their surgery and whose job is not physically demanding (i.e. does not involve heavy lifting or long periods of standing up).

Obviously, every individual has different needs and recovers in different ways – so not all the advice in this leaflet will be suitable for everybody.

As always, if you're in any doubt, take professional advice. Everyone who undergoes a lung resection for cancer should have an allocated keyworker at the hospital who helps co-ordinate all aspects of your care. They will help you to make the right choices for a safe and speedy recovery.

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What to expect after the operation

Painkillers

Painkillers may well cause constipation, so it's important to get plenty of fibre in your diet while you are recovering. Fresh fruit and vegetables will help to keep your bowels moving regularly.

Scar

You will have a wound around the side of your chest. It may be raised and swollen at first but this should gradually settle. You may bathe and shower as normal but avoid rubbing soap or shower gel directly onto your wound. Pat dry with a soft towel. Do not pick any scabs which form as they are protecting the new tissue that is growing underneath.

Stitches

If your surgeon has used stitches or clips then the ward staff will arrange for a district nurse from your GP practice to remove these for you. This is normally done at your home 7-10 days after your operation. If you have had a chest drain, the stitches from this will also be removed by the district nurse but may be taken out at a different time.

Dressings

Some wounds require a dressing on them as they can leak a little fluid. If this is the case the ward nurses will arrange for the district nurses to come and change this dressing for you.

Discomfort

You will experience some pain following your surgery, around the site of your scar on your back, but also at the front of your chest as well. If you get a tingling or burning sensation in the front of your chest, or a feeling of numbness, this is perfectly normal in people recovering

from a lung resection operation. It can take a few weeks for the pain to settle and you may have some discomfort for up to 3 months after your operation. This can easily be managed with painkillers. You will normally be given a week's supply of painkillers to take home with you (though this will be decided according to your specific needs in consultation with your surgeon). You will be able to get further painkillers from your GP.

Posture

You need to keep an eye on your posture following your operation. The physiotherapist will have shown you some arm and shoulder exercises and you should continue to do these for 6 weeks. Not doing your exercises can allow you to stoop or become tilted to one side and this could lead to a frozen shoulder.

Constipation

After an operation it is common to suffer from constipation. The painkillers, along with the changes in your diet and activity, are all causes of constipation. To avoid this, you should try and eat a diet high in fibre, i.e., lots of fruit and vegetables, wholewheat bread and cereals, and also drink plenty of water. As your activity improves you should find that your bowel movements return to normal. Sometimes a laxative may be needed, which you can get by speaking to your consultant or GP.

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What to expect after the operation

Appetite

After your operation, you may find that your appetite has reduced, though it should return as you recover. Eating little and often may help to ensure that you are getting all the nutrients that you need, even if you don't feel hungry.

If you lost weight prior to your operation you should speak to your GP for advice on improving your appetite and diet. In the long term, it is advisable to ensure your weight remains within the recommended guidelines.

Tiredness

Your body is using a lot of energy to heal itself, so you will feel more tired than normal - sometimes it can come upon you suddenly but don't feel that it's going to be that way forever. As your physical activity levels improve you will steadily start to feel less tired.

Feeling emotional

If you feel upset or emotional in the days and weeks after your operation, don't worry - this is a perfectly normal reaction which many people experience.

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Things that will help you recover more quickly

If you live alone, and you do not have family or friends close by, organise support in advance - have family or friends come to stay with you for the first few days after surgery if possible.

Stop smoking

The single most important thing you can do to give yourself the best chance of recovery is to stop smoking - right now. By not smoking, you immediately start to improve your circulation and your breathing - not to mention a whole list of other benefits to the heart and lungs. The risk of developing complications after your operation will also reduce significantly if you stop smoking. Free expert help is available on the NHS to help you stop - ask your nurse or GP.

Eat healthily

Fresh fruit and vegetables will help to ensure that your body has all the nutrients it needs to heal.

Family and friends

Family and friends can give you two important things:

- Practical help with the tasks you might be temporarily unable to do while you recover - such as driving, the weekly shop, or lifting heavier items.
- Keeping your spirits up - the novelty soon wears off being home alone all day, and it's easy to feel isolated by this. Having company can help you to worry less. It's important not to let anxiety set in, as it can become a problem in itself which stands in the way of you getting back to your normal routine.

Keep a routine

Get up at your normal time in the morning, get dressed and move about the house. If you get tired, you can rest later.

Build up gradually

Have a go at doing some of the things you'd normally do, but build up gradually. Some suggestions are included in the recovery tracker. Obviously, everyone recovers at a different speed, so not all of the suggestions will be suitable for everybody.

When you're building up your activities, you may feel more tired than normal. If so, stop, and rest until your strength returns. If you feel pain, stop immediately and consult your GP.

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Returning to work

You do not need your GP's permission to go back to work – this is ultimately your decision.

Returning to work

Although most people who need to have a lung resection are retired, as increasing numbers of people now work beyond the retirement age, it's worth mentioning how to balance work and recovery if this applies to you.

Fact: work can be part of your recovery

Everyone needs time off to recover after an operation - but too much of it can stand in the way of you getting back to normal. In fact, by staying off for too long, people can become isolated and depressed. Getting back to your normal routine sooner rather than later will play a big part in preventing this.

Getting back to work

How quickly you return to work depends on a number of things:

- How you heal
- How you respond to surgery
- The type of job you do

People whose work involves a lot of heavy lifting, or standing up or walking for long periods of time, will not be able to return to work as quickly as those who have office jobs which are less demanding physically.

How soon can I go back?

Every person recovers differently and has different needs. In most cases it's usually safe to return to work between three to four months after the operation. Your consultant or GP can advise you on this.

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Planning for your return

3 golden rules for a speedy recovery:

Stay active.

Keep a normal daily routine.

Keep social contact with people.

Confidence

It will take you a little while to regain your full confidence when you go back to work. You may be slower than normal at first, so don't take on too much responsibility too soon. Don't be too hard on yourself about this - it's perfectly normal and you'll start to get back up to speed after a few days.

Talk to your Occupational Health service or GP to work out when and how is best for you to return to work.

Depending on the nature of your job, you might want to ask your employer about returning to work on lighter duties at first. This means:

- Spending more time sitting rather than standing or walking
- Doing work that is mostly paperwork, using a computer or telephone
- Not carrying more than around 5kg any significant distance
- Avoiding tasks such as prolonged loading or unloading, packing or unpacking.

If you have an HR Department at work, they will be able to advise you on how your absence might affect any benefits you may be receiving during your time off.

Depending on the type of work you do, people who've had a lung resection sometimes find that in the long term, they need to be redeployed into a role which is less strenuous. If you think this is the case, talk to your workplace Occupational Health service.

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Driving

Your insurance company should be informed about your operation. Some companies will not insure you for up to four weeks after having lung resection.

It is important to remember that the painkillers you are taking may have a sedative effect, which can slow down your reactions.

In addition, you must be able to be able to do an emergency stop without causing yourself any pain or soreness, or without damaging your operation wound.


Driving - An exercise

After about a month, you might want to test your fitness to drive. You do this without switching the engine on: simply sit in the driving seat and practise putting your feet down on the pedals. Again, build up gradually. If you feel pain, stop immediately. If you feel sore afterwards, you may need to wait a day or two and try again. Only when you can put enough pressure on the pedals to do an emergency stop - without feeling any pain or soreness afterwards - should you think about driving again.

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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
1-2 days	<p>You are likely to be in a high dependency area with nursing staff closely monitoring your oxygen levels and blood pressure. You will have a chest drain after the operation which - the length of time which the drain has to stay in varies from person to person</p> <p>You'll feel groggy from the anaesthetic and very tired. You'll also experience pain in your chest area from the operation, and discomfort in your leg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">By the second day, most patients are able to sit up in bed, and will be able to eat and drink on their own.		No



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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
2–6 days	Nurses will give you pain relief for your chest and surrounding muscles. Usually the chest drain comes out during this period, occasionally you may be discharged with a chest drain. If this is considered your consultant / nurse will discuss with you. It is extremely important to do breathing exercises / coughing and walking around the ward with help. It is these simple things which will speed your recovery and prevent complications after the operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises to improve your breathing. The nurses and physiotherapist will begin to get you moving around the ward. 		No
1 week	By now, most people will be at home, and any pain can be controlled with the medication you've been prescribed. It's normal to feel anxious or depressed, and a bit short of breath. If you are concerned discuss with your visiting nurse or GP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk around your home. You might feel stiff at first, but getting moving again will help you to recover more quickly. Set aside specific rest times in bed and stick to them. 		No

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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
2-4 weeks	You may feel slightly short of breath as your activity levels increase, but this will improve. Remember that you will be more short of breath than you were before the operation, but it is important to gently build up your activity levels to strengthen your lung function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steady exercise, particularly walking, is ideal. Rest after a meal and before and after exercise, and keep a good balance between the two. Do your breathing exercises. 		No
4-6 weeks	You'll have more energy, but may feel tired towards the end of the day. You may have some numbness around the scar and in front of the chest and may also occasionally get sharp pain. If it concerns you, discuss with your nurse / consultant at the follow up appointment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the after you get homepage to build up your levels of activity slowly and steadily. 	 	Not just yet
8-12 weeks	Between 6-8 weeks after your operation, you will have your follow-up appointment with your surgeon, who will be able to assess your recovery and discuss with you whether you need any further treatment, or if you are fit to resume normal activities.		 	Maybe after 3 months


When can I have sex?

For many people, being able to have sex again is an important milestone in their recovery. There are no set rules or times about when it's safe to do so other than whether it feels OK to you - treat it like any other physical activity and build up gradually.

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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
16 weeks	<p>If you haven't had any complications to do with your surgery, and you're still not back to living life as you normally would, it's possible that you're feeling anxious or depressed. Talk to your keyworker, your GP, and, if you are still in work, to your employer. Between you it's possible that you can work out a solution that can help you make a full recovery.</p> <p>Holidays For many people, having a lung resection marks an important turning point in life. Having a holiday to look forward to is a good way of improving your recovery. There are no restrictions to holidaying in the UK, but it is advisable to not plan any long journeys until you are feeling comfortable enough to be able to sit for long periods.</p> <p>Flying If you have had part of your lung removed it is recommended that you do not fly for 12 weeks following your operation.</p> <p>Travel insurance Getting travel insurance following surgery can sometimes be difficult, so it's best to shop around for a good deal. Travelling within the European Union is probably easier than elsewhere in the world, mainly because you can access any emergency treatment that you need - provided that you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). However, it's important to remember that this does not cover you for the cost of having to be flown home under medical supervision after emergency treatment, which is an expense that you will have to cover yourself. Also, the emergency cover provided is only to a level given to the people resident in that country.</p>		YES

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After you get home

Week	Got up at ... am	Activities (eg walked for ... minutes)	How much rest I needed after each	Went to bed at ... pm	How have I been feeling? Any pain? Emotional feelings?	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						

Remember, take a step-by-step approach to getting better, and build up your activities in small stages. Don't push yourself too far too fast. If you're concerned about anything, or if you feel you're not making progress fast enough, ask your surgeon or call your GP.

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Keeping well

Because of your operation, the chances are you'll be a lot more aware of your body and how it works.

Right now is a really good time to build on the knowledge you've gained and make small changes to your lifestyle which can prevent you from experiencing certain health problems in the future. You can do this by:

- Improving your diet - get 5 portions of fresh fruit and veg per day.
- Any exercise – The best medical advice suggests that you should try to do 30 minutes of physical activity a day. In the early stages of your recovery even if it's just a few short walks each day – really will make a difference to your health.
- Quit smoking - NHS Stop Smoking Services are one of the most effective ways of to stop for good – and they're completely free. Your doctor will be happy to help you.

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Website links

The internet's a great thing – anything you want to know is there for you at the click of a mouse but, do be careful about the way you use it when it comes to getting information about your health. It's hard to know which sites to trust, and none of them can tell you anything that's specific to your individual medical needs.

If you do want to know more about your operation, recovery or return to work, here is a list of trusted websites that offer safe, sensible, useful information:

The Royal College of Surgeons of England
<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>

Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Great Britain and Ireland
<http://scts.org/>

NHS Stop Smoking Service
<http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/Homepage.aspx>

Department for Work and Pensions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/>

DVLA - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

Call 111 for nonemergency medical advice