

Lung issues

Health information after cancer treatment as a child or teenager

The purpose of this factsheet is to tell you about long-term side effects (called 'late effects') that can happen after having cancer treatment. They can happen soon after treatment has finished or later in life. The medical team at the hospital where you received your treatment or your long-term follow-up team will be able to help you with specific information about which late effects are relevant to you.

The lungs are essential organs that supply oxygen to the body. It is vital to be aware of the potential problems that may occur due to your treatment and what you can do to keep your lungs as healthy as possible.

Who is at risk?

The following may affect the health of your lungs:

- chemotherapy drugs:
 - bleomycin
 - carmustine (BCNU)
 - lomustine (CCNU)
 - busulfan
 - high doses of cyclophosphamide
- radiotherapy to the chest including mediastinal (central part of the chest), spine or whole lung
- total body irradiation (TBI)
- surgery to lungs or chest
- chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) following bone marrow transplant
- significant lung infections during your treatment

Your risks may also be increased by:

- younger age at the time of cancer treatment
- exposure to other drugs that can enhance the risks from radiotherapy (eg. anthracyclines and actinomycin)
- smoking
- pre-existing lung problems (chronic asthma or lung disease)

How do we monitor lung issues?

A lung (pulmonary) function test and a chest X-ray at least once after completion of all cancer treatment. Your doctors can decide with you if further testing is required based on the results and your previous treatment.

How will I know if I have lung damage?

Some people have no symptoms, even when their lungs have been affected by their cancer treatment. Your team may therefore want to perform regular screening tests. It is important that you attend for regular monitoring. Symptoms caused by lung problems include:

- long-standing cough
- shortness of breath
- fatigue on mild exertion/exercise
- frequent lung infections

What can I do to keep my lungs healthy?

To keep your lungs healthy you should:

- **avoid** smoking, including passive smoking
- take **regular exercise** and eat a **healthy diet**
- ask your GP about having **yearly vaccinations** (such as flu and/or covid), especially if you have evidence of lung problems
- **remember** to tell the doctors that you have received bleomycin, particularly before any treatment or operation that requires an anaesthetic and oxygen – whenever possible avoid breathing high concentration of oxygen for a long period of time (see CCLG late effects factsheet - bleomycin)

- **avoid scuba diving** until you have received further advice and assessment by a specialist from the UK Diving Medical Committee
- **seek medical advice** before considering a parachute jump or non-pressurised flying
- follow **safety regulations** in your work place and avoid breathing toxic fumes

Where can I find out more information?

The UK Diving Medical Committee (UK DMC) has further information about scuba diving
www.ukdmc.org



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Registered charity in England and Wales (1182637)
and Scotland (SC049948).

© CCLG 2022
Date published: September 2022
Next review date: September 2025



Written by CCLG Late Effects Group, a national network of experts who specialise in looking after young cancer survivors, in conjunction with the CCLG Information Advisory Group, comprising multiprofessional experts in the field of children's cancer. If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us. CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) is a leading national charity and expert voice for all childhood cancers.

Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed with cancer. Our network of dedicated professional members work together in treatment, care and research to help shape a future where all children with cancer survive and live happy, healthy and independent lives.

We fund and support innovative world-class research and collaborate, both nationally and internationally, to drive forward improvements in childhood cancer. Our award-winning information resources help lessen the anxiety, stress and loneliness commonly felt by families, giving support throughout the cancer journey.

Our work is funded by donations. If you would like to help, text 'CCLG' to 70300 to donate £3. You may be charged for one text message at your network's standard or charity rate. CCLG (registered charity numbers 1182637 and SC049948) will receive 100% of your donation.