

Lung nodules

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What is a lung nodule?

A lung nodule is a small rounded or oval shadow seen in the lung on a CT scan or chest X-ray. It may also be referred to as a 'spot on the lung.' Lung nodules are smaller than 3 centimeters in diameter (around 1.2 inches).



What has caused my lung nodule?

Lung nodules are very common. Around 1 in 4 people who have smoked will have a lung nodule. Approximately 1 in 10 people who have not smoked will have lung nodules. Lung nodules can be caused by a variety of problems, including infections or inflammatory problems. Lung nodules are common in people who have had TB.

Is it dangerous?

Most lung nodules are benign (non-cancerous) and do not cause any symptoms. In a small number of people, a lung nodule may be an early lung cancer.

How long has it been there?

Lung nodules are often found incidentally when you have investigations for another problem. They may have been there for a long time without causing you any problems.

What symptoms do they cause?

Usually lung nodules do not cause any symptoms. If you are suffering from symptoms, these may be due to the underlying condition which is causing the nodules.

What happens next?

Your scans will be discussed at a specialist meeting. We may suggest follow-up scans as either an X-ray or CT scan in 3 or 12 months' time. If these show that the nodule(s) are growing, we may need to arrange further tests such as a biopsy or a specialist CT scan.

Can the nodules be treated/removed now?

Removing the nodules now would involve major surgery which carries significant risks. This could potentially cause you serious harm by removing something which may never have caused you any problems.

Are these scans likely to cause me harm?

We attempt to minimise any radiation you receive through investigations. If possible, in order to limit this, we will perform a restricted CT scan which only looks at a small area of your lung or a chest X-ray.

What if I decide not to have further tests?

We do not know the underlying cause of your lung nodule(s). If you decide not to have any further investigation, there is a chance that it will not cause you any problems in your lifetime. However, if your nodule(s) represent an early cancer, then this could become more advanced and incurable.

Who can I contact if I have any further questions?

Your GP will be kept informed of your progress. You can contact your GP if you have any questions.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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