



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Lung Nodules

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## **Respiratory Department**

① For more information, please contact:

The Lung Pathway Navigator

Telephone: 01904 724583

(hours of work Monday to Friday 8am-4pm)

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

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## What is a lung nodule?

Finding a lung nodule on a chest X-ray or CT scan is common. A lung nodule is a small, more dense area of the lung which appears on the image.

Common features:

- often small, measuring less than 30mm wide
- don't have any symptoms, and
- do not affect the function of the lungs or interfere with breathing.

Your doctor or specialist nurse may show you your scan to help you understand what we're looking at.

## How are lung nodules found?

It is very common that if you have a symptom related to your lungs or your breathing, the doctor may ask you to have a chest X-ray or CT scan to take pictures of your lungs.

In other cases, a scan may be done for other reasons (for example to assess your heart or kidneys). If so, any parts of the lungs that are seen on the scan will still be reviewed by the doctor.

Sometimes a lung nodule is also called a 'pulmonary' nodule and the two phrases mean the same thing.

## What causes lung nodules?

The nodule can be due to lots of different causes. These can include:

- a small area of infection or inflammation
- scarring
- normal glands within the lung
- previous tuberculosis (TB)

In a small number of cases, they can be the first signs of an early cancer in the lung. If this is the case, finding them early makes them much more treatable.

## **How common is it to have a lung nodule?**

Up to 35% of people who have a CT scan which includes their lungs will have a nodule found. Sometimes it is possible to find more than one nodule in your lungs. This is not necessarily more serious than having a single nodule.

## **What do you look for when you review my scans?**

Specialist respiratory and radiology doctors and specialist nurses look at the size of the nodule and the characteristics of its appearance to help decide which nodules do require follow-up or assessment.

Not all lung nodules require more follow-up. We use national guidelines which have been written using evidence from clinical studies of thousands of people's scans and their outcomes.

These guidelines and the features described help us to decide what to do next with each sort of nodule and pick out any that might need follow up.

We also take into account lots of other factors like your age and other medical history.

## What happens next?

It is not always possible to tell what a nodule represents on the very first scan. In these cases, we may offer you one or more further scans to see if the nodule changes or stays the same over a period of time.

Most lung nodules stay the same size, get smaller, or even disappear. If the nodule has not increased in size over several scans, no more follow-up is required. The majority of lung nodules do not change.

The process of repeated scans and reviewing results is sometimes called 'nodule surveillance' or active monitoring.

After your scan the team will review the images and then contact you (either by letter or in a clinic appointment) with the result and whether you need further tests or not. They will also keep your own GP updated.

## **What happens if my doctor or specialist nurse tells me I need other tests?**

A small number of people may be asked to do more specialised tests after CT scans. This is because we know a small number of nodules can develop into early lung cancer, and it is important to get follow-up of these nodules right.

If a nodule is cancerous, we aim to diagnose it early so we can offer more treatment options and aim for curative treatment if possible.

It is important to remember, though, that the general risk of a nodule being early lung cancer is small.

## **Further questions?**

Your GP will be kept fully informed about your progress. You can contact your GP for any information or if you have any questions.

If you do develop any symptoms within your chest, please contact your own GP as it is unlikely that it will be related to the lung nodule.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Lung Pathway Navigator at York Hospital on:  
01904 724583  
(hours of work Monday to Friday 8am-4pm).

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Lung Pathway Navigator, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or 01904 724583.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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