

How to differentiate lung cancer from COVID 19

An infographic for healthcare professionals by Lung Cancer Clinical Expert Group (CEG) and secretariat Roy Castle Lung Foundation

Start

LUNG CANCER

Features more suggestive of lung cancer:

Unexplained / Persistent

Unexplained / Persistent

Duration > 4 weeks

Cough

Breathlessness

Fatigue

COVID-19

Features more suggestive of Covid 19:

Acute onset

Acute onset

Acute onset

Other red-flag Covid-19 symptoms?

- Fever
- Myalgia
- Loss of smell
- Loss of taste
- Initial flu-like symptoms for 1-2 weeks with onset of respiratory symptoms from 7-10 days
- Close contact with a confirmed/ highly suspected case of COVID-19

Any of these red-flag lung cancer symptoms?

- haemoptysis
- chest pain
- weight loss
- appetite loss

And any other findings?

- finger clubbing
- neck nodes / supraclavicular nodes
- chest signs consistent with lung cancer
- thrombocytosis

Consider lung cancer risk factors:

- smoking
- Age
- Asbestos exposure

INDETERMINATE FEATURES

- Cough, unclear onset and persistence
- Breathlessness, unclear onset and persistence
- Flu-like symptoms lasting longer than 3 weeks
- Fatigue with duration <4 weeks
- Unclear if any fever
- Feeling of chest tightness
- Difficulty in taking a deep breath
- Recurrent chest infections with possible features of COVID-19
- No other clear red flag symptoms

ACTION

1 Arrange a swab for SARS-CoV-2 PCR. If...

PCR Positive

Manage according to current COVID-19 guidelines and review after 2 weeks hospital admission not required.

PCR Negative

Ask patient to self-isolate as per current guidance.

Persistent Symptoms
If persistent, refer as lung cancer symptoms left.

2 If symptoms require urgent attention, consider emergency admission.

ACTION

- 1 a) Arrange an **urgent swab** for SARS-CoV-2 PCR, and;
b) Refer for chest X-Ray or direct to lung cancer service for CT (await PCR negative result prior to imaging and follow local COVID-19 guidelines)

PCR Positive

Manage according to current COVID-19 guidelines and review after 2 weeks if hospital admission not required;

consider **2 week wait referral** in patient recovered from COVID-19 in whom lung cancer suspected.

PCR Negative

Refer for **Chest X-ray** or direct to lung cancer service for **CT and triage** on national Optimal Lung Cancer Pathway.

2 **Emergency**

If symptoms require urgent attention, consider emergency admission.

ACTION

- 1 Manage according to current COVID-19 guidelines.
- 2 Consider differential diagnosis.
- 3 If symptoms require urgent attention, consider emergency admission.

