

# Pulmonary nodules

## Information for patients

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### **I have been found to have a lung nodule. What does this mean?**

A lung nodule is a very small area of roundish shadowing seen on a CT (Computer Tomography) scan which measures 3cm / 1 inch or smaller. It does not cause any symptoms. A person may have several nodules. This is not necessarily more serious than just having one.

### **What causes lung nodules?**

Lung nodules are very common.

About 1 in 4 (25%) of older people who smoke or who have smoked have nodules.

About 1 in 10 people who have never smoked may also have nodules.

Nodules may be caused by infection or scarring from previous infections. They are common in people who have had TB in the past, but can also be due to other health conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

### **Are lung nodules cancerous?**

Most nodules are benign (non-cancerous). In a very small number of people the nodule could be an early lung cancer.

### **How can we find out the cause?**

It is not always easy to know the cause of a nodule just from one CT scan. Because they are very small, doing a biopsy on them (taking a piece of the nodule out and examining it) can be very difficult and risky.

### **Do all nodules grow?**

No. Benign (non-cancerous) nodules usually do not grow but cancerous ones will eventually grow. The best way to assess them is to repeat the CT scan after a period of time.

### **So what happens next?**

A repeat CT scan will be arranged after 3 to 12 months, depending on advice from the lung specialist team. If your nodule stays the same, we may be able to discharge you. If a nodule grows or changes in any way, a lung specialist may arrange for you to have further tests. This might include a different kind of CT scan or possibly a biopsy.

## What if my nodule is cancer?

If your pulmonary nodule does turn out to be lung cancer, it is most likely an early-stage lung cancer for which there are many treatment options, usually with the intention to cure, rather than slowing it down.

Please do not hesitate to discuss your concerns with a member of the lung specialist team.

## How will I get my results?

After your CT scan you will be contacted by the lung specialist team by letter, telephone consultation or outpatient consultation, with the results and next steps. Even if the nodule grows the whole idea of this programme is to find things before they cause symptoms or problems.

If you do develop any symptoms in your lungs at all, please contact your GP. It is very unlikely they will be due to the nodule, but it is important to let your GP know anyway about your lung health.

Your GP will be kept informed about your progress. You can contact your GP in the first instance if you have any questions.

