

# 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 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.

## 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.



## 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.