

Tips

Support from specialists

A respiratory physiotherapist can help you to clear mucus from your lungs. Breathing therapists can also support you.

Psycho-oncological support

Coughing can make you feel worried, and upset your daily life. A psycho-oncologist is a healthcare professional who helps people to cope with the emotional and psychological difficulties associated with cancer. They can help you and your family. Ask your healthcare team for advice.

You are not alone

The website «www.cancersupport.ch» helps you talk to other people who are going through similar situations to you. You can talk online in a safe space or join group activities — online or in person.

Further information on the topic

- «www.stopsmoking.ch», for help to quit smoking (available in several languages, but not in English)
- «Lung cancer www.lungenliga.ch», Lung League



Cough

Good to know

Coughing is a natural reaction that helps to keep your airways clear. When your lungs or airways are inflamed, coughing can help remove mucus. Coughing can be short-term (acute, lasting less than 3 weeks) or long-term (chronic, lasting more than 8 weeks). A cough can feel different:

- It can be dry and sometimes painful, and it can be hard to cough up mucus
- It can be wet, when mucus comes up more easily

A chronic cough can be caused by cancer or by other reasons. If you have a chronic cough, you should always see your doctor or oncologist. They can give you treatment if you need it.

Take notes to describe your cough. This will help your doctor. Please note when it started, how long it lasts, what triggers it, if it's dry or wet, and any other symptoms.

Palliative care teams can also help you with ongoing symptoms. Ask your healthcare team for advice.

Cough

Do you feel	Or you realise	What you can do yourself
	• Your cough isn't too bad • It won't stop you from doing things you do every day	• If you have a new cough, you should see your oncologist. They can tell you what is causing your cough and give you treatment if you need it. Otherwise, take your pain medicines or cough medicines as prescribed, at regular times. If your voice feels tight, or if your throat feels dry: • Drink enough to keep your throat wet and stop you from coughing: 6 to 8 glasses of water, tea, or herbal tea a day or more. • You can drink warm water or herbal tea with honey and lemon. • Try not to smoke, drink coffee or alcohol, as these can make coughing worse. • Try to breathe slowly through your nose, not your mouth.
	• You cough a lot and it sounds really bad. It makes it hard to do everyday things • You wake up with a cough • Your doctor has been treating your cough for more than three months	Follow the advice in the green box and: • Find out what things can make your cough worse and avoid them: smoky rooms, dust, cold dry air, and chemical sprays (like air fresheners, perfumes, and insecticides). • Have a warm, steamy shower to help clear your airways and loosen mucus. • Do some gentle exercise to help clear your airways, but avoid any kind of hard physical activity. • If you cough, try to sit or stand up. You can also raise the head of your bed a little at night.
	• Your cough has got much worse over in the last 1–2 days • You have a fever and you have a mucus that is yellow or green and thick • You feel a sharp pain when you breathe • You are worried that you might choke or pass out	• Contact your healthcare team straight away or go to the emergency department.