

Your Health

 Health Partners

NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER



LUNG CANCER & MANAGING STRESS

In this issue of *Your Health* we take an in depth look at lung cancer, from diagnosis to the different stages and recovery. We also look at how stress impacts our physical health, with tips on how to overcome stress to keep yourself healthier and happier.

Lung Cancer Awareness

In support of November’s Lung Cancer Awareness month, we have set out the information below to help you understand the causes, signs, symptoms and treatment options for people who either have lung cancer or are at risk of developing it.

WHAT IS LUNG CANCER?

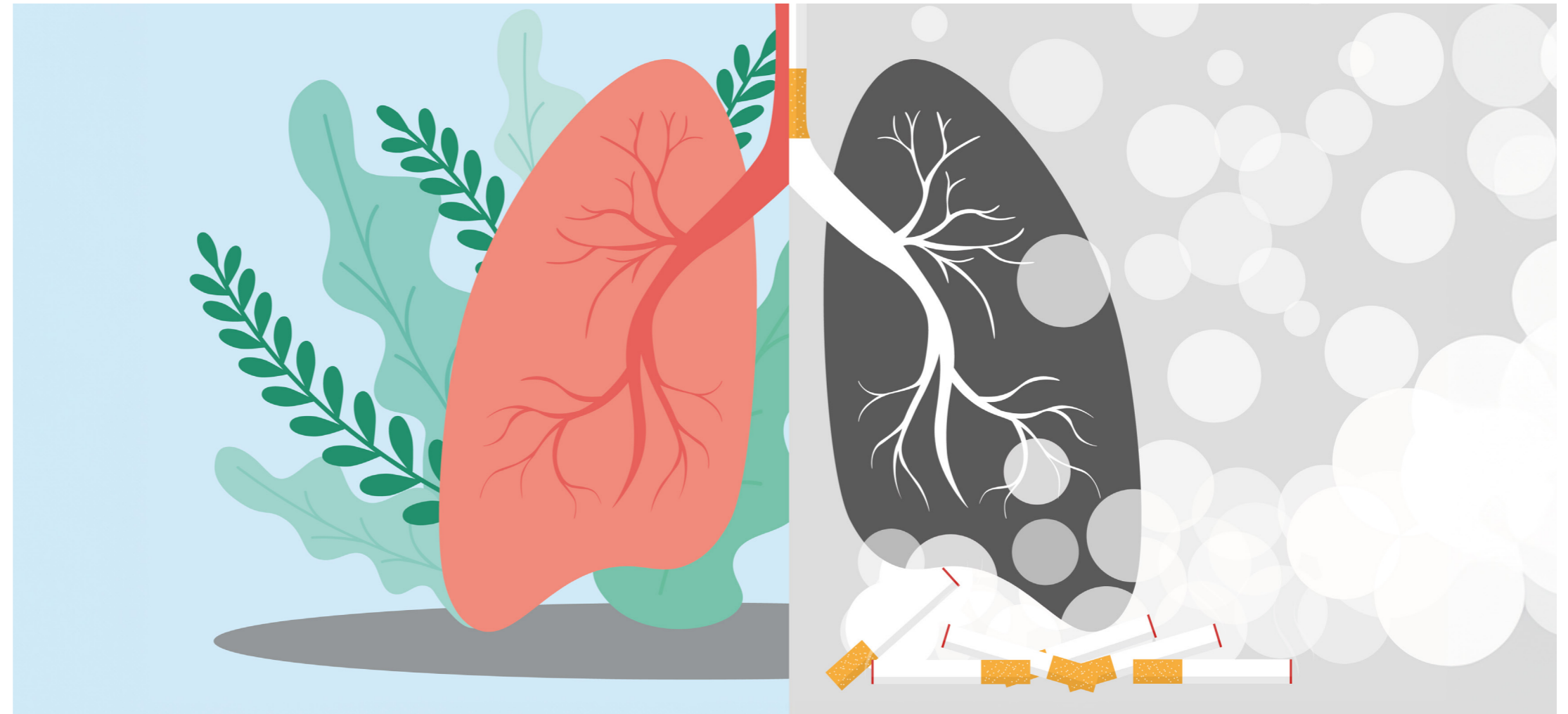
Lung cancer starts in the windpipe (trachea), the main airway (bronchus) or the lung tissue. This is called primary lung cancer.

Lung cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK, with nearly 50,000 people diagnosed each year. There are two main types of primary lung cancer. These are:

- ▶ Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)
- ▶ Small cell lung cancer (SCLC).

NSCLC is more common and there are three main types:

- ▶ Adenocarcinoma: this type develops from cells that make mucus and is more often found in the outer area of the lung.
- ▶ Squamous cell carcinoma: this type is less common and develops in the cells that cover the surface of the airways (usually near the centre of the lungs).
- ▶ Large cell lung cancer: this is the least common type and can arise in central or outer areas of the lungs.



There is also cancer that arises in the layers of tissue covering the lungs (the pleura). This is called pleural mesothelioma.

Sometimes cancer spreads to the lungs from somewhere else in the body. This is called lung metastases or secondary lung cancer.

THE MAIN CAUSE OF LUNG CANCER

- ▶ Smoking tobacco is the cause of most lung cancers and the most important risk factor. This includes smoking cigarettes, cigars or pipes. The more you smoke, the greater your risk.
- ▶ Around 90% of people who get lung cancer are smokers or ex-smokers. Starting smoking at a younger age increases the risk. In the UK, 72% of lung cancer cases are thought to be caused by smoking.

- ▶ Smoking increases your risk of heart disease, stroke and developing new cancers.
- ▶ People who do not smoke can also get lung cancer, but their risk is much lower. About 10% of people who get lung cancer have never smoked.

IF YOU SMOKE, STOPPING IS THE HEALTHIEST DECISION YOU CAN MAKE.

You are far more likely to be successful at giving up smoking if you do it with structured support. Most people are not successful the first time that they try to stop, but, if you really want to stop, try again.

- ▶ It can reduce the side effects of some treatments, e.g. some of those for cancer and it can help you to heal faster after surgery.

- ▶ Giving up smoking is not easy, but it can be done. Using a stop smoking treatment with help from an NHS support service or your GP gives you the best chance of success.
- ▶ There are support groups available for people trying to quit, as well as one-to-one support. Ask your GP for advice or contact one of the [national stop smoking services](#).
- ▶ However long you have been smoking, it is always worth quitting. When you stop smoking, the risk of lung cancer gets lower over time. After 12 years, the risk of getting lung cancer is about 70% lower than it is for those who still smoke. After about 15 years, it is almost the same as a non-smoker.

“Smoking tobacco is the cause of most lung cancers”

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LUNG CANCER

Lung cancer may not always have symptoms early on. Symptoms typically develop as the condition progresses. The symptoms of lung cancer can include:

- ▶ A cough for three weeks or more
- ▶ A change in a cough you have had for a long time
- ▶ A chest infection that does not get better, or repeated chest infections
- ▶ Feeling breathless and wheezy for no reason
- ▶ Coughing up blood
- ▶ Chest or shoulder pain that does not get better
- ▶ Unexplained persistent fatigue, loss of appetite or weight loss
- ▶ A hoarse voice for three weeks or more
- ▶ Rarely, changes to shape of your nails (clubbing).

If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to get them checked by your GP without delay.



DIAGNOSIS OF LUNG CANCER

If your GP thinks your symptoms could be caused by lung cancer, they will arrange tests to help make a diagnosis. This will typically involve arranging an urgent chest x-ray (within two weeks).

If this test shows anything abnormal, your GP will refer you to a chest specialist urgently on a suspected cancer pathway referral, with the aim of establishing diagnosis or ruling out cancer within a month. Sometimes they will do this before getting the result of the chest x-ray. At the hospital, the specialist will explain any other tests you need. These may include:

- ▶ A CT scan
- ▶ A PET-CT scan
- ▶ A bronchoscopy (camera test) with a biopsy or ultrasound scan.

If early tests show you have lung cancer, your specialist may arrange further tests. These will help to determine the type of cancer and whether it has spread to other parts of the body. These tests may include specialist camera tests (mediastinoscopy and/or thoracoscopy) or an MRI scan.

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STAGES OF LUNG CANCER

The stage of a cancer describes its size and position and if it has spread from where it started. Knowing the stage helps your doctors advise the best treatment for you.

The staging looks at:

- ▶ The size of the tumour.
- ▶ If the cancer has spread into nearby parts of the lung, or outside the lung.
- ▶ If the cancer is in lymph nodes nearby, in the chest or further away.
- ▶ If the cancer has spread further outside the lung or to other parts of the body.
- ▶ If the lung has partially or fully collapsed, amongst other things.

The four stages of lung cancer are:

- ▶ Stage 1: this is when the cancer is no bigger than 4cm and has not spread outside the lung or to the lymph nodes.
- ▶ Stage 2: the cancer sizes can be different and may have spread to nearby lymph nodes, other parts of the lung or areas just outside the lung.
- ▶ Stage 3: the cancer can be any size, has usually spread to lymph nodes and may have spread to other parts of the lung or areas outside the lung but not to other parts of the body.
- ▶ Stage 4: the cancer can be any size and may have spread to lymph nodes, the other lung or another part of the body, such as the liver, bones or brain.

TREATMENT FOR LUNG CANCER

Treatment depends on the type of lung cancer, the location and size, how far it has spread and how good your general health is. The aim of the treatment might be remission of cancer or simply to try and control progression of disease.

If the condition is diagnosed early and the cancerous cells are confined to a small area, surgery to remove the affected area of lung may be recommended. Other treatment options include radiotherapy and chemotherapy. They can be used as well as or instead of surgery depending on your individual situation. You might be offered immunotherapy medicines, which encourage the body's own infection-fighting system to control cancer cells. Targeted therapies are suitable for some people, depending on the characteristics of their tumour. They target specific proteins produced by some cancer cells carrying genetic changes (mutations) that are helping them to grow.

AFTER TREATMENT

You will be offered regular follow-up appointments after treatment. These are likely to involve regular imaging of the lungs. It is natural to feel anxious before the appointments - even if you have completed active lung cancer treatment and are considered to be in remission. It may help to get support from family, friends or a support organisation.

GETTING SUPPORT

- ▶ Macmillan Support Line (freephone): 0808 808 00 00
- ▶ NHS Lung Cancer: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lung-cancer
- ▶ Cancer Research UK: www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/lung-cancer
- ▶ NHS Quit Smoking: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking

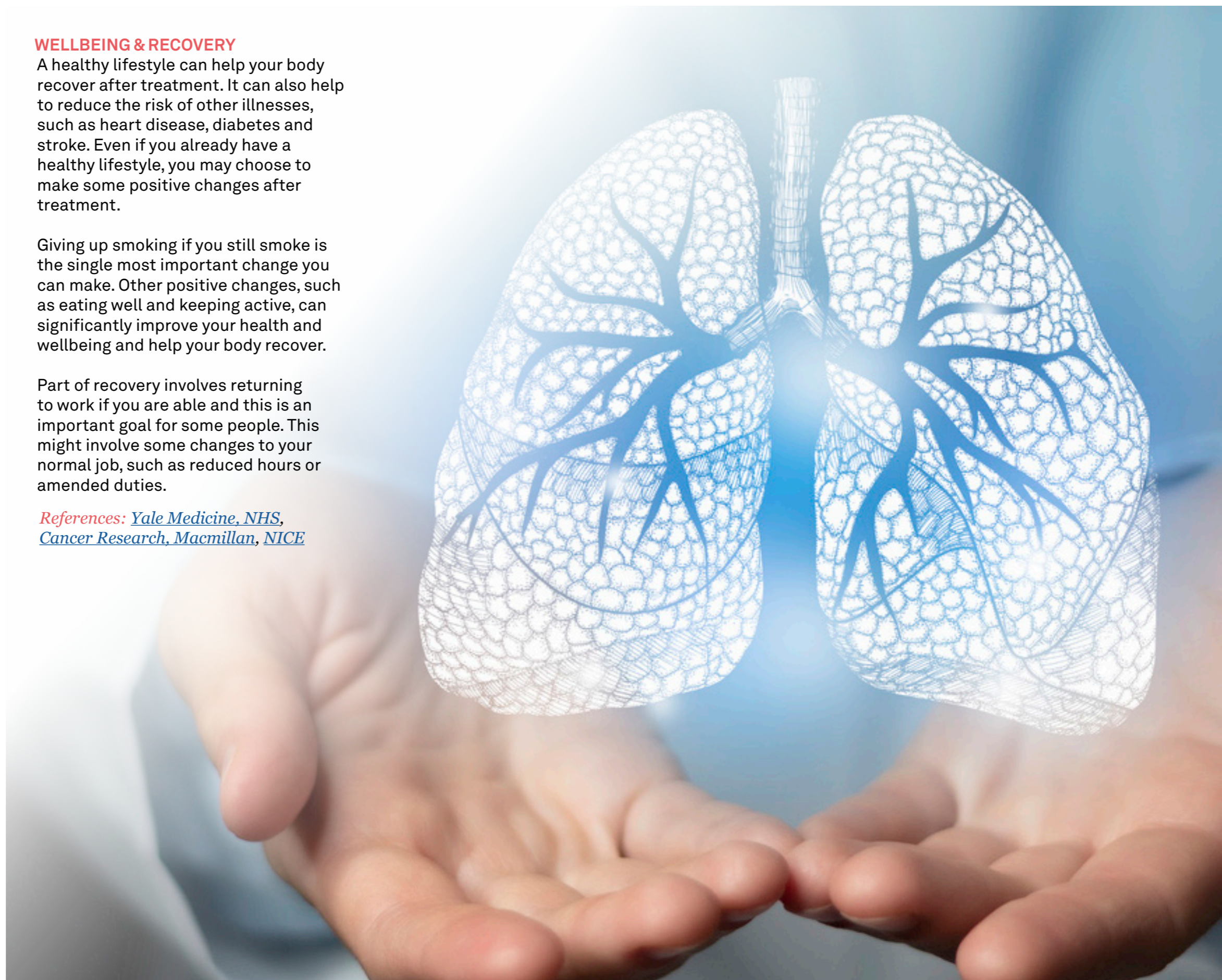
WELLBEING & RECOVERY

A healthy lifestyle can help your body recover after treatment. It can also help to reduce the risk of other illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Even if you already have a healthy lifestyle, you may choose to make some positive changes after treatment.

Giving up smoking if you still smoke is the single most important change you can make. Other positive changes, such as eating well and keeping active, can significantly improve your health and wellbeing and help your body recover.

Part of recovery involves returning to work if you are able and this is an important goal for some people. This might involve some changes to your normal job, such as reduced hours or amended duties.

References: [Yale Medicine](#), [NHS](#), [Cancer Research](#), [Macmillan](#), [NICE](#)



Stress & Physical Health

HOW STRESS AFFECTS YOUR BODY AND WAYS TO BEAT IT

Have you ever felt your heart race when you're worried or your stomach twist before a big event? That's stress doing its work. While a little bit of stress can help us react quickly in tricky situations, too much stress for too long can cause problems for our bodies. Let's take a look at how stress can affect our health and what we can do to keep it under control.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is our body's natural and innate response to challenges or demands. Think of it like your body's alarm system; when you sense danger, your body releases hormones that make you more alert, tense your muscles and get your heart pumping. It tends to happen when we do not think that we are able to cope with the demands placed upon us. It is not a disease. The body's response is fine for short-term troubles, but if the alarm system keeps going off or is not switching off, it can wear your body out.

THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON YOUR BODY

If you're stressed all the time, it can harm your health in several ways:

- ▶ Heart trouble: Constant stress can make your heart work too hard for too long, elevate your blood pressure and increase your risk of heart problems.
- ▶ Digestive troubles: Stress can upset your stomach and lead to problems like heartburn, indigestion, or worsening symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- ▶ Tight muscles: Ever feel knots in your shoulders when you're stressed? That's because stress can make your muscles tense up, which can lead to aches and pains.
- ▶ Sleep problems: Stress can make it hard to get a good night's sleep and not enough sleep can make stress harder to manage. It's a cycle that can be hard to break.
- ▶ Weight changes: Some people eat more when they're stressed, while others eat less. Both can affect your health.
- ▶ Getting sick: Stress can make it harder for your body to fight off germs, so you might get ill more often.
- ▶ Mental health: Stress doesn't just affect your body; it can impact your mood, making you feel down, irritable, on edge or anxious. Failing to address stress starts to increase your risk of a mental health issue like anxiety or depression.

HOW TO HANDLE STRESS

The good news is that there are lots of ways to get a handle on stress:

- ▶ Get moving: Exercise is a great way to manage stress. It helps release 'feel-good' chemicals in your brain and makes good use of the physiological changes in your body from the "alarm system" response.




“Stress is a part of life, but it doesn't have to take over.”

- ▶ Take a deep breath: Techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or yoga can help calm your mind and body.
- ▶ Eat well: A healthy diet can help your body cope better with stress. Try to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- ▶ Sleep tight: Make sure you're getting enough sleep. It helps your body and mind recover from the day.
- ▶ Write it down: write down your main concerns and possible ways to address them. You might need some advice from others or to ask for help when addressing the issues.
- ▶ Talk it out: Chatting with friends or family can help you feel better. Sometimes just saying what's stressing you out loud can help you feel less worried.
- ▶ Professional help: If stress is really getting to you, talking to a counsellor or therapist can help you find ways to cope.

Stress is a part of life, but it doesn't have to take over. By understanding how stress affects your body and learning ways to deal with it, you can keep yourself healthier and happier. Remember to take time for yourself, keep active, eat right and reach out for help when you need it. Your body will thank you for it!

Resources: [NHS](#), [NHS Inform](#), [Mental Health Org](#)

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright yellow beanie and a dark green or black zip-up jacket, is stretching her arms behind her head. She is outdoors, with trees and a utility pole visible in the background. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day.

NEXT ISSUE:

- Holiday Health
- Seasonal Affective Disorder

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.