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## **Lung Cancer - Non-Small Cell - Symptoms and Signs [1]**

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 06/2016

**ON THIS PAGE:** You will find out more about body changes and other things that can signal a problem that may need medical care. To see other pages, use the menu.

People with NSCLC may experience the following symptoms or signs. Sometimes people with NSCLC do not have any of these changes. Or, the cause of a symptom may be another medical condition that is not cancer.

- Fatigue
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain, if a tumor spreads to the lining of the lung or other parts of the body near the lungs
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing up phlegm or mucus

- Coughing up blood
- Unintentional weight loss
- Hoarseness

If you are concerned about any changes you experience, please talk with your doctor. Your doctor will ask how long and how often you've been experiencing the symptom(s), in addition to other questions. This is to help find out the cause of the problem, called a [diagnosis](#) [3].

For people with NSCLC who have no symptoms, the cancer may be noticed on a chest x-ray or CT scan performed for some other reason, such as checking for heart disease. Most people with NSCLC are diagnosed when the tumor grows, takes up space, or begins to cause problems with parts of the body near the lungs. A lung tumor may also make [fluid that can build up in the lung or the space around the lung](#) [4] or push the air out of the lungs and cause the lung to collapse. This prevents oxygen from getting in the body and carbon dioxide from leaving the body by blocking the flow of air into the lungs, or by using up the space normally required for oxygen to come in and carbon dioxide to go out of the lung.

NSCLC can spread anywhere in the body through a process called metastasis. It most commonly spreads to the lymph nodes, other parts of the lungs, bones, brain, liver, and structures near the kidneys called the adrenal glands. Metastases from NSCLC can cause:

- More breathing difficulties
- Bone pain
- Abdominal or back pain
- Headache
- Weakness
- Seizures
- Speech difficulties

- Rarely, a lung tumor can release hormones that cause problems such as low blood sodium levels or [high blood calcium levels](#) [5].

Symptoms such as fatigue, feeling out-of-sorts or unwell, and loss of appetite are not necessarily caused by metastases. Cancer anywhere in the body can cause a person to feel unwell in a general way. Loss of appetite can cause weight loss. Fatigue and weakness can further worsen a person's ability to breathe.

If cancer is diagnosed, relieving symptoms remains an important part of cancer care and treatment. This may also be called symptom management, palliative care, or supportive care. Be sure to talk with your health care team about symptoms you experience, including any new symptoms or a change in symptoms.

*The [next section in this guide is Diagnosis](#) [3]. It explains what tests may be needed to learn more about the cause of the symptoms. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide*

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## Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/lung-cancer-non-small-cell/symptoms-and-signs>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19153>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25249>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25255>