Treating Lung Cancer while at home

Lung cancer can feel like a scary and overwhelming diagnosis, but with modern advances in treatment and proper care - recovery is attainable. In the last twenty years, there have been significant advances in lung cancer treatment with the discovery of new drugs and better treatment options (www.medscape.com).

During the treatment process, it is possible to continue your lifestyle in the comfort of your home, doing the things you love, being around the people most important to you and living the life you want.

There are three main types of lung cancer. It can be important for a caregiver to understand the type of lung cancer and treatment their aging adult or loved one might be undergoing.

Types of Lung Cancers (www.cancer.org)

Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer
Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer is the most common type of lung cancer, accounting for about 85% of lung cancers. Subtypes of this cancer include: squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma, and large cell carcinoma.

Treatment
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation Therapy
- Surgery
- Radiofrequency ablation (RFA)
- Targeted Therapies
- Immunotherapy

Small Cell Lung Cancer
Small cell lung cancer makes up 15 to 20% of lung cancer cases and is sometimes called oat cell cancer. This cancer is fast growing and can spread quickly to other parts of the body.

Treatment
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation Therapy
- Surgery

Lung Carcinoid Tumor
Lung carcinoid tumors are less than 5% of lung cancers. They are also sometimes called lung neuroendocrine tumors. Most of these tumors grow slowly and rarely spread.

Treatment
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation Therapy
- Surgery
- Other drug treatments

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How Caregiving is Involved

Caregivers play a vital role in helping care for an individual who has been diagnosed with lung cancer.

**Appointments:** Caregivers can attend appointments with patients and take notes of information the doctor says. It may be overwhelming for the individual with lung cancer, so notes will be helpful to refer to later. Caregivers can also help the patient keep appointments organized and provide transportation to and from appointments.

**Encourage emotional well-being:** Part of your role as caregiver is to provide emotional support to the individual with lung cancer. They may want to talk about their fears or anxiety of living with the disease. Having a supportive ear can help them work through things they may otherwise be unable to.

**Provide good nutrition:** Providing good nutrition to a person with lung cancer can go a long way in their overall health and wellness. Good nutrition during and after treatment can help them maintain weight, keep up energy and strength and help them better tolerate symptoms. Sometimes, eating problems can occur due to treatment and result in a variety of barriers that can include: difficulty swallowing, sore mouth, vomiting, loss of appetite, change in taste and stomach problems. Caregivers can help manage these issues and ensure their older adult is receiving the nutrition they need.

**Follow-up care:** After cancer treatment, it is important for the individual to be monitored by their doctor regularly to ensure the cancer has not returned. Regular doctor’s visits can occur for up to 10 years. Caregivers can play an important role as they can not only provide the transportation, but also an encouraging word and supportive touch during the process. For cancer patients, side effects may show up right away or even years later. Caregivers can help track side effects after treatment to report to the doctor during the visits.

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**Home Care Tip:**

Caregivers can be a vital part of a loved one being treated for or recovering from cancer. It is important for the caregiver to have access to resources to help them through this process. Visit www.cancer.org for this helpful guide that offers information on caring for a loved one at home with cancer. The guide covers a variety of physical, mental and emotional health topics.

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