

Patient information

Information about lung nodules

Introduction/procedure

You have been informed that you have a nodule (or nodules) in your lung. This is a very common finding and is usually nothing to worry about. Lung nodules are often very small (too small to investigate further) and cause no symptoms. They are often found incidentally whilst having a chest x-ray or CT scan for another condition and do not affect the function of the lungs or interfere with breathing.

Once discovered, it's important to observe the appearance of the nodule(s) over time. This is done by repeating an x-ray or CT scan of your chest at certain intervals. Some nodules can be seen on chest x-ray whilst others require a CT scan to be seen clearly. The interval between the scans or x-rays is usually 3 or 6 months and is determined by your age, whether you smoke and the original size of the nodule(s). It is not the same for everyone, but we follow nationally agreed guidelines.

After each scan, the images will be reviewed by the specialist chest team and the nodules measured. You will be informed of the result of the review by telephone 2-3 weeks after the scan. Most lung nodules stay exactly the same size, get smaller or even disappear over time. If a nodule has not increased in size over a series of scans or x-rays, you will be informed that no more follow up is required.

Rarely a lung nodule may increase in size. If so, it's important to determine the nature of the nodule and further investigation will be necessary.

Risks, benefits, alternatives

The risk of ignoring small lung nodules is that they may be an indication of a more serious condition developing. There is a small risk associated with exposure to radiation if repeated CT scans are required. The dose is kept as low as possible.

The benefit of lung nodule follow up is to ensure early detection of small malignancy in the lung.

The alternative to monitoring of lung nodules is to ignore them and risk something more serious developing.

Complications

Complications associated with lung nodule follow up include the possibility of undergoing further investigations should the nodule change in size which may have some specific risks associated with them. If you have any concerns, please speak to your Doctor or specialist nurse.

Respiratory Nurse Specialists:

Lynne Evans 01284 713652

Kerri Welham 01284 712779

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

