

*The* ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

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Supporting your health and  
wellbeing via the Thoracic Cancer  
Service Pathway

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**Patient Information**



**NHS**



**Thoracic Cancer Service**

World-leading diagnosis and treatment

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Delivered by The Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton



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## Introduction

This booklet is intended to support people referred to the clinic following diagnostic tests with the Thoracic Cancer Services.

The Thoracic Cancer Service is a collaboration between the Royal Brompton Hospital and The Royal Marsden.

Your GP has referred you to The Royal Marsden to have some tests. These tests will check whether you may have a serious illness. We understand this is worrying, but it's important to have these tests to detect any potential problems as early as possible.

Whilst waiting for these tests, we recommend you start to take more care of yourself. Making changes now will help you:

- Lower your chances of future health problems such as heart disease, stroke and developing certain cancers
- Manage and improve any other medical or health conditions you already have such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

If you do need treatment in the future then making these changes now will give you the following benefits:

- Better self-management of mood
- Increased energy levels
- Ability to do more of your usual day-to-day activities
- Improved sleep pattern and quality of sleep
- Greater general fitness and sense of wellbeing
- Fewer problems during and after treatment (should you need any).

## How can I help myself?

Start to think about your routines, activities, lifestyle, habits and eating patterns. Are there things you can do to help improve your health and wellbeing? These include:

- Looking after your mood and wellbeing
- Stopping smoking or at least significantly cutting down

- Moving more and being as active as possible
- Looking after your diet by eating well
- Keeping hydrated by drinking enough fluids, especially water
- Cutting out alcohol or at least minimising your intake.

## Your mood and wellbeing

It's common to experience a rollercoaster of feelings and emotions when waiting for tests and test results. The following ideas might help you manage your fears and worries.

- Ask questions about what will happen during tests. Your healthcare team can provide the answers or signpost you to resources with further information.
- Try to limit internet searches for your symptoms as it may cause more anxiety. If you do, always use reliable websites such as the NHS website.
- Maintain your usual routine to help keep a sense of normality.
- Think about who you can turn to for emotional or practical support. You may find it helpful to share your feelings with someone you trust.
- Practise self-care. Do more of what you find soothing during stressful times – taking a warm bath, reading, listening to music, exercising, cuddling your pet or enjoying other relaxing activities.
- Treat yourself with the same compassion that you would show a close friend or family member if they were going through a difficult time.

**Relaxation or mindfulness may help focus your mind and help you handle these feelings.**

Try listening to audio resources that can help to bring a sense of relaxation.

There are various free audio tools that you could use to try to bring a sense of relaxation, such as ones focused on progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness 'body scans' and visualisation exercises.

There are apps you can download including *Calm* and *Headspace* (charges apply). You can also access relaxation exercises on YouTube.



## **Moving more and being active**

Being active is one of the most important things you can do to support your health and wellbeing. It helps to maintain a healthy weight, reduces stress, lifts mood, strengthens bones and muscles and decreases the risk of developing chronic conditions and diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

Adults should aim for:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate activity with increased breathing but still being able to talk
- 75 minutes of vigorous activity with fast breathing and difficulty talking
- Or a combination of both.

Try to sit less and move more. Start slowly and build up to being active for 30 minutes every day. Just 10 minutes of activity at a time will benefit your health. Guidelines are available for different ages and stages in life. Please see NHS Live Well [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well) for details.



### **Tips for building physical activity into daily living routines**

There are various everyday things that you can do to increase your levels of physical activity, such as vigorous housework, gardening and walking. Other ideas could include:

- Going out for a brisk walk most days and making use of local parks and green spaces



- Using the car less and making use of public transport
- Trying new activities in local leisure centres
- Strength and balance exercises, such as tai chi, dance or yoga will increase activity and can help to reduce the risk of falls.

**For further ideas on how to get more active visit the below sites**

### **Physical activity**

*<https://keepingmewell.com/home-2/looking-after-yourself-information-for-families-carers/physical-activity/>*

### **10 Minute workouts**

*[www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/)*

### **NHS Fitness Studio**

*[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/)*

### **Videos**

**Eating well and keeping active** – Macmillan resource on health and fitness

*[www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatment/preparing-for-treatment/eating-well-and-keeping-active](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatment/preparing-for-treatment/eating-well-and-keeping-active)*

**Whole body strength exercises** – Stronger Your Way guide from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

*[www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/whole](http://www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/whole)*

**Upper body strength exercises** – Stronger Your Way guide from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

*[www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/upper](http://www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/upper)*

**Lower body strength exercises** – Stronger Your Way guide from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

[www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/lower](http://www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way/i-want-feel-stronger/strengthening-exercises/lower)

**NHS fitness studio** – a collection of videos on dancing, running, strength training, yoga, pilates and other

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/pilates-for-beginners/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/pilates-for-beginners/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/chair-based-pilates-exercise-video/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/chair-based-pilates-exercise-video/)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/yoga-with-lj/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/yoga-with-lj/)

## **Apps**

**NHS walking tracker** – tracks your steps, helps you set goals and gives you tips to boost activity

[www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/)

## **Eating well**

Eating a healthy and balanced diet plays an important role in looking after our own health and wellbeing. Choosing a wide variety of foods and well balanced meals can help you feel better and maximise your energy levels. This is especially important should you require any future treatments.

### **Useful tips**

- Try to have at least 3 meals per day.
- Include starchy carbohydrates at each meal, for example, wholegrain cereals, bread, potatoes, rice, chapattis and pasta. A portion is about the size of your fist.

- Aim for 2–3 portions of dairy items or dairy-free alternatives daily. If your doctor has advised you to lose weight, choose the lower fat variety. A portion is typically one small pot of yoghurt, matchbox size piece of cheese or 200mls of milk.
- Aim to include protein foods with each meal, such as meat, chicken, fish, egg, nuts, beans, lentils, pulses, Quorn®, plant-based proteins or tofu. Please see The British Heart Foundation for further information and details on portion sizes. [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)
- Try to include at least 5–7 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. One portion is roughly the size of your fist. Fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are all suitable.



- We recommend taking a vitamin D supplement (10 micrograms per day) during autumn and winter months. If your access to sun light is reduced, you are isolating indoors, or are over the age of 65 years, you may benefit from a vitamin D supplement all year round. Discuss with your local high street pharmacist or healthcare professional if you are unsure which supplement to take.
- Drinking enough water is important; aim for at least 6–8 glasses of water per day. More information can be found on the NHS website:  
*[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/water-drinks-nutrition/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/water-drinks-nutrition/)*

### **If you are underweight, are losing weight or have a poor appetite**

The ‘little and often’ approach can be helpful. Try having three meals a day with snacks and nourishing drinks in between. Ideas include mixed nuts, yoghurts, cheese and crackers, toast and butter, hard boiled eggs and hot drinks made with full fat milk.

If you are worried about weight loss, the BAPEN (British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition) website has further information and support. *[www.bapen.org.uk](http://www.bapen.org.uk)*

This includes a self-screening tool which can then provide advice to prevent you from losing further weight.

If you need to see a dietitian, you can ask your GP for a referral.

You can also visit *[www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)* for more information.

## **Smoking**

Stopping smoking is hard, but strongly advised, and well worth it. Quitting or cutting down will improve your general health.

If you are having surgery, quitting can also speed up your recovery and reduce your time in hospital. Refraining from smoking if you contract a winter respiratory illness or COVID-19,

will give your lungs the greatest help. We know how hard it is to stop, but there is help available.

The NHS website has more information to support you:

*[www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking)*

Contact your GP for support or the Royal Brompton Hospital Smoking Cessation Team, Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation.

Email [rbh-tr.smokingcessation@nhs.net](mailto:rbh-tr.smokingcessation@nhs.net)

Telephone 01895 823737 x85362

## Alcohol

Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to cope with any future treatment.

### What can I do?

1. Check if you are drinking within safe limits  
*[www.drinkaware.co.uk/selfassessment](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/selfassessment)*
2. Advice on how to drink within the recommendations  
*[www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/how-to-reduce-your-drinking/](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/how-to-reduce-your-drinking/)*
3. Further support and tips on cutting down alcohol  
*[www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/)*

## Finances

Money worries can contribute to anxiety and have a negative impact on your general wellbeing. If you are worried about your finances, it is important to seek support from the following:

- Your employer
- Citizens advice  
*[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/getting-financial-advice/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/getting-financial-advice/)*

- Mind

*[www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/money-and-mental-health/organising-your-finances/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/money-and-mental-health/organising-your-finances/)*

## **Further information**

For further information about weight loss, quitting smoking, getting active and drinking less, please visit the NHS website:

*[www.nhs.uk/better-health/](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/)*

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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