

# Coughing



Réseau de  
cancérologie  
Rossy

Rossy  
Cancer  
Network

## Symptom Management Tip Sheet

### ? Let's talk about coughing...

- Coughing is a natural reflex. It is your body's way of clearing your airway and protecting your lungs.
- A cough can happen for many reasons. Some can be simple, like a cold, allergies or smoking. This is not worrisome. But a cough can also be more serious. It can be related to the cancer, cancer treatments or an infection.
- Some coughs can be treated. Other times, the goal is to manage the cough to help you feel better and be able to enjoy your daily activities
- If you have shortness of breath, please refer to the *shortness of breath* tip sheet.
- **Advise your healthcare team** if you have a new cough, a persistent cough, if you cough up greenish yellow mucus, or if your cough gets worse.
- If you cough up blood and/or feel new pain the chest, **go to the emergency room or call your healthcare team immediately.**
- If you are undergoing chemotherapy and any of these types of pain are accompanied by a fever (temperature greater than 38°C), **go to the emergency room immediately.**

*\*\*If you are undergoing IMMUNOTHERAPY and have these symptoms please **contact your healthcare team as soon as possible.** Delays can increase side effects and toxicity.*



### What you can do

- Ask your healthcare team if there are any treatments or medications that may help your cough.
- Ask your healthcare team if physiotherapy could improve your cough. A physiotherapist can show you the best way to clear your airways.
- Take a hot, steamy shower to loosen mucus.
- Try cough drops (ex: Halls, Cepacol, etc.) and/or a warm drink with honey.
- Try relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing.
- Use a humidifier in dry rooms.
- Drink a lot of fluids, which makes mucus in the throat thinner.
- Avoid smoking and breathing second-hand smoke.
- Avoid anything that triggers an allergic reaction.
- Avoid throat-irritating aerosol sprays like hairspray, deodorant, fragrances, and cleaning products.
- Do moderate physical activity such as yoga. This can help clear your airways (but avoid strenuous exercise).

Source : Physical, Emotional, and Social Effects of Cancer | Managing Physical Side Effects ©2021  
Comprehensive information for people with cancer, their families, and caregivers, provided by the  
American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

*This information should not be considered as medical advice. It is not to be used in place of a  
visit with a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional. If you have questions about your  
individual medical situation, please consult with your healthcare professional.*

### Other resources

#### Managing lung cancer symptoms - Cough

[https://www.lungcancercanada.ca/en-CA/Lung-Cancer/Screening-\(1\)/Managing-symptoms.aspx](https://www.lungcancercanada.ca/en-CA/Lung-Cancer/Screening-(1)/Managing-symptoms.aspx)

#### Supportive Care for Lung Cancer - Cough

<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/lung/supportive-care>

#### More resources at

<https://www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/patient>

### Who can help



#### Nurse Navigator (IPO)

If you have one, please speak with  
your IPO

### If you are getting treatment at:

- **Oncology Clinic, call:**  
Symptom Management  
Hotline  
514-340-8222 ext. 25529  
Mon – Fri. 8h00-16h00
- **Radiation Oncology Clinic,  
call:**  
514-340-8222 ext. 24124