

WHAT'S NEXT AFTER INITIAL TREATMENT?

A GUIDE TO MAINTENANCE THERAPY

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR CHOICES SO YOU CAN PLAN WHAT COMES NEXT

WHAT IS MAINTENANCE THERAPY?

Maintenance therapy is a treatment given after your first treatment (also known as induction therapy) has worked (cancer has shrunk or is no longer growing) to help keep cancer under control. It is not always offered but may be discussed as an option based on your overall health and if your cancer responded to initial therapy.

THE ROLE OF MAINTENANCE THERAPY IN SCLC



Small cell lung cancer (SCLC) often responds well to initial treatment, but in many cases the tumor may still continue to spread.

Studies show that **more than 90% of people with advanced SCLC face recurrence within two years** after initial treatment.^{1,2}



Maintenance therapy may help extend the amount of time before cancer returns, thus delaying more intense treatments and allowing more time with stable health.³

HOW YOU MIGHT RECEIVE MAINTENANCE THERAPY

METHOD

WHAT IT MEANS

Continuation maintenance	Continuing part of the therapy you have already been using to maintain response. ⁴
Switch maintenance	Starting a different treatment after initial therapy to continue controlling cancer. ⁴
Targeted therapy	Using drugs that attack cancer cells based on specific genetic or molecular features. ⁵
Immunotherapy	Using treatments that help your immune system recognize and fight cancer cells. ⁶

Your care team will consider your disease stage, how you responded to initial treatment and side effects you may have had, and your personal goals in deciding whether maintenance therapy is right for you.

WHAT MAINTENANCE THERAPY MIGHT OFFER

Here are some possible benefits*, based on clinical studies and patient experiences:

- More time that the cancer is stable and under control
- Delay before stronger or more toxic treatments are needed
- Potential to maintain better quality of life by reducing disease-related symptoms

*Results will vary for each person

TOP 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CARE TEAM



- 1 Should I consider exploring maintenance therapy? Why or why not?
- 2 What benefits might it offer in my situation?
- 3 What side effects should I watch for, and how can we manage them?
- 4 How often would I need visits, scans, or treatments?
- 5 What are the alternatives if I decide not to do maintenance therapy or if the cancer comes back?

Tip: Bring someone with you to appointments to help take notes and remember information.



SUPPORT AND WHAT TO EXPECT

Your emotional wellbeing matters. Support groups, counsellors and peer connections can help.

Keep track of symptoms, side effects and how you feel physically and emotionally (a journal or app can help).

Ask about resources for caregivers so your support system gets help too.

NEXT STEPS

If your first treatment for SCLC has been successful, talk with your care team about whether maintenance therapy may be right for you. Discuss what you have read here, share your priorities, and decide together what makes sense for your care plan.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE – SUPPORT AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE

Navigating treatment decisions can feel overwhelming, but you are not alone.

For more tips on talking to your doctor about your care plan, download our [Doctor Discussion Guide](#). It outlines questions and considerations to help you prepare for appointments and guide meaningful conversations about your treatment goals.

You can also explore resources on [Nothing Small About It](#), including:

- [Wellness Tips](#): Guidance around different aspects of wellness, including financial health, mental health, and physical health
- [Support for SCLC Caregivers](#): For family and friends caring for someone with SCLC

References

1. Saida Y, Watanabe S, Kikuchi T. Extensive-Stage Small-Cell Lung Cancer: Current Landscape and Future Prospects. *Onco Targets Ther*. 2023 Aug 2;16:657-671. doi: 10.2147/OTT.S272552. PMID: 37551311; PMCID: PMC10404428.
2. Karacz, C. M., Yan, J., Zhu, H., & Gerber, D. E. Timing, sites, and correlates of lung cancer recurrence. *Clinical lung cancer*. 2020 Mar, 21(2), 127-135. doi.org/10.1016/j.clcc.2019.12.001
3. Paz-Ares L, Gupta B, Baena J, Liu SV. Unmet Needs in Maintenance Therapy for Extensive Stage Small Cell Lung Cancer. *Clin Lung Cancer*. 2025 May;26(3):168-178. doi: 10.1016/j.clcc.2025.02.015. Epub 2025 Mar 1. PMID: 40155220.
4. Maintenance Therapy in Advanced Non-small Cell Lung Cancer: Current Status and Future Implications Stinchcombe, Thomas E. et al. *Journal of Thoracic Oncology*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 174 – 182
5. Paulus V, Pana-Katatali H, Perol M, Paget-Bailly S, Trinquart L, Perol D, Calais F, Bonnetain F, Westeel V. Maintenance therapy for advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2019 Sep 24;2019(9):CD011631. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD011631.pub2. PMCID: PMC6759278.
6. American Cancer Society. Treatment Choices for Small Cell Lung Cancer, by Stage. Lung Cancer Treatment by Stage | Treating SCLC by Stage | American Cancer Society. Updated December 6, 2024. Accessed October 7, 2025.

