

COMMONLY USED CANCER CARE TERMS & WHAT THEY MEAN



If you or your loved one is experiencing a “first” related to small cell lung cancer (SCLC) – a new diagnosis, a shift in treatment course or an addition to a care plan – **you may suddenly start to hear unfamiliar words and phrases.**

With the help of lung cancer organizations and others in the cancer community, **this glossary breaks down some of the most commonly-used terms associated with cancer care and why they’re important to understand.**

You may find it helpful to print this list and keep it close by for reference during conversations with healthcare team members.

Diagnosis & Testing

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Blood chemistry test	A test performed on a blood sample to measure the amount of certain substances in the bloodstream, such as electrolytes, fats, proteins, glucose and enzymes. ¹	This test provides important information about how well the liver and kidneys are functioning. An abnormal amount of a substance in the blood can help determine if the body is strong enough to handle surgery or an additional SCLC treatment. ^{1,2}
Complete blood count (CBC)	The measure of the number of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets in the blood. ¹	<p>Blood cells (including red and white blood cells and platelets) have three main functions: carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body, work with the immune system to fight infection and control bleeding.¹</p> <p>A complete blood count (CBC) lab test measures whether there’s a healthy level of these blood cells in the body. CBC and blood chemistry tests both assess important health factors that help shape an SCLC treatment plan.²</p>

Diagnosis & Testing

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
CT scan (CAT scan)	A computerized tomography (CT) scan combines a series of images taken from different angles around the body and uses computer processing to create cross-sectional images (slices) of the bones, blood vessels and soft tissues inside the body. ³	A CT scan is a non-invasive method that can help doctors detect a tumor, guide local treatments and plan certain surgeries and therapies. CT scans are also used to monitor tumors and treatment responses by providing details about a tumor's size, shape and position. ^{2,4}
Lymph node	A small, bean-shaped structure that is part of the body's immune system. ¹	<p>The lymph nodes, a vital part of the immune system, are responsible for filtering substances that travel through the body and also contain white blood cells that fight infection and disease.¹</p> <p>Doctors monitor lymph nodes very closely in lung cancer patients because if they grow, this could suggest that SCLC has spread.²</p>
Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)	A technique in which radio waves and a powerful magnet linked to a computer are used to create detailed pictures of areas inside the body. ¹	<p>While CT is more widely used in cancer than other scanning techniques, some people with SCLC may undergo magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) as an additional measure to detect if the disease has spread.^{2,4}</p> <p>SCLC can potentially spread to the nervous system or other parts of the body.² MRI creates clear images of the brain, spine, soft tissue of joints and inside the bones.¹</p>

Diagnosis & Testing

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Neuroendocrine tumor	<p>A tumor that forms from cells that release hormones into the blood in response to a signal from the nervous system.¹</p>	<p>Neuroendocrine tumors, such as SCLC, may make higher-than-normal amounts of hormones and can cause many different symptoms.¹</p> <p>Some possible symptoms include: fatigue, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, persistent pain in a specific area, a lump in any part of the body, nausea or vomiting, a persistent cough or hoarseness, diarrhea, facial flushing, high or low levels of glucose in the blood, gastric ulcer disease, skin rash, confusion, anxiety and certain nutritional deficiencies.⁵</p>
Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)	<p>The most common type of lung cancer. NSCLC includes three main subtypes, all of which start from different types of lung cells but are grouped together due to their often-similar treatment and outlook.⁶</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adenocarcinoma, which starts in cells that would normally secrete substances such as mucus. It is usually found in the outer parts of the lung and is more likely to be found before it has spread.⁶• Squamous cell carcinoma, which starts in squamous cells. These are flat cells that line the inside of the airways in the lungs.⁶• Large cell (undifferentiated) carcinoma, which can appear in any part of the lung. It tends to grow and spread quickly, which can make it harder to treat. A subtype of this cancer, known as large cell neuroendocrine carcinoma, is fast-growing and very similar to SCLC.⁶	<p>NSCLC makes up about 80% to 85% of lung cancers.⁶</p>

Diagnosis & Testing

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
PET scan	<p>A technique in which radioactive (radiation-releasing)¹ glucose is inserted into a vein. A scanner is then used to make digital pictures of areas inside the body where that glucose is absorbed.¹</p>	<p>Cancer cells absorb more glucose than normal cells do.¹ By observing areas in the body where more glucose is absorbed, the PET scan can determine where a tumor is in the body and if it has spread.⁴</p>

Small cell lung cancer (SCLC)	<p>An aggressive (fast-growing) cancer that forms in tissues of the lung and can spread to other parts of the body.¹</p>	<p>SCLC gets its name from the way its cells look under a microscope; they are round, oval or spindle-shaped and smaller than both normal cells and the cells of the other type of lung cancer (NSCLC).²</p> <p>This type of lung cancer tends to grow and spread faster than NSCLC. SCLC tends to respond well to chemotherapy and radiation therapy. However, for many people, the cancer may return at some point and require additional care to treat.⁶</p>
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Staging, Treatment & Supportive Care

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Clinical trial	<p>A type of research study that tests how well new medical approaches, like a new treatment, work in people.¹</p>	<p>Clinical trials test new treatment approaches. Ask your doctor if a clinical trial might be a good option for you.²</p>

Staging, Treatment & Supportive Care

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Healthcare team	<p>A group of professionals who provide care for patients and answer questions about the medical, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of cancer.⁷</p>	<p>There are doctors who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer – these doctors are called oncologists and there are a few different types.</p> <p>Medical oncologists manage care plans for and treat individuals with cancer using chemotherapy and other treatments.</p> <p>Surgical oncologists perform surgery on tumors to diagnose and treat cancer. Finally, radiation oncologists treat tumors or cancer with radiation therapy.⁷</p> <p>Oncology nurses, along with oncologists, provide bedside care and help patients and their families understand their cancer and treatment plan.⁷</p> <p>People may also have access to other healthcare team members including oncology social workers, psychiatrists and clergy members, who can provide supportive care related to the emotional and spiritual aspects of cancer.⁷</p>
Hospice care	<p>A program that gives special care to people who are near the end of life and have stopped treatment to cure or control their disease.¹</p>	<p>The goal of hospice care – which offers physical, emotional, social and spiritual support to those who are nearing end of life – is to help patients feel as comfortable as possible by controlling pain and other symptoms. It is typically given at home but can also be given in a hospital or nursing home.¹</p>
Metastasis	<p>When cancer cells spread from where they first formed to other parts of the body.¹</p>	<p>SCLC cells are small, but they can grow very quickly, creating tumors that often spread to other parts of the body, such as the brain, liver and bone.⁸</p>

Staging, Treatment & Supportive Care

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Palliative care	Care given to improve the quality of life for patients who have a serious or life-threatening disease. ¹	<p>Palliative care, also sometimes referred to as comfort care, supportive care and symptom management, is used to prevent or treat certain side effects of any type of disease, including SCLC, and its treatment.</p> <p>Palliative care can help ease physical symptoms as well as emotional problems related to disease or its treatment.²</p>
Peripheral neuropathy	A nerve problem that causes pain, numbness, tingling, swelling or muscle weakness in different parts of the body. ¹	Peripheral neuropathy is a possible side effect of chemotherapy, and its symptoms may be controlled with over-the-counter or prescription medications if a doctor suggests them. Pain can also be managed with techniques such as physical therapy and massage therapy. ²
Prophylactic cranial irradiation (PCI)	A type of radiation therapy that is used to prevent the recurrence of tumors in the brain and central nervous system. ⁹	Prophylactic cranial irradiation (PCI) is a standard treatment option for SCLC patients, whether they have limited-stage or extensive-stage disease. The goal of this therapy is to prevent central nervous system recurrence in people who have had success with previous lung cancer treatments. ⁹
Pulmonary rehabilitation	A program used to help improve lung function after surgery, as well as reduce symptoms and improve quality of life for people living with SCLC and other diseases. ¹⁰	<p>While not all SCLC patients are eligible for surgery, many receive care from pulmonary specialists if their symptoms, such as shortness of breath, are impacting their ability to perform daily activities.¹⁰</p> <p>It can be personalized to meet each person's needs, and it's usually carried out by a team of providers including doctors, nurses, physical therapists and dietitians.¹⁰</p>

Staging, Treatment & Supportive Care

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Remission	When cancer signs and symptoms decrease (partial remission) or disappear (complete remission). ¹	<p>Remission means that signs and symptoms of cancer are decreased, and it can be either “partial” or “complete.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partial remission, also known as partial response, means that treatment is working against the cancer, but the disease has not gone away completely.¹¹• Complete remission, also known as complete response, means that the doctor can no longer find evidence of cancer in the body.¹¹ Some people in complete remission may get maintenance therapy, which is a treatment that helps prevent cancer from coming back.^{1,12}

Staging	<p>Stage refers to the extent of cancer, such as how large the tumor is and if it has spread. Knowing the stage of your cancer helps your doctor:¹³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand how serious your cancer is and your chances of survival• Plan the best treatment for you• Identify clinical trials that may have other treatment options for you	<p>A doctor may use imaging techniques, surgery or a pathology examination to figure out the stage of SCLC. Learning the stage of cancer can help a doctor determine a care plan and track treatment results.²</p> <p>Doctors usually break SCLC into two main stages: limited-stage and extensive-stage.</p> <p>Limited-stage describes cancer that is only present in one part of the chest. Extensive-stage describes disease that has spread to other parts of the lungs, or other parts of the body such as the brain or bone marrow.¹⁴</p> <p>Some healthcare providers and organizations may utilize a numerical system for staging (separating different stages of SCLC using numbers).¹⁴ For more information on numerical staging, click here.</p>
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Staging, Treatment & Supportive Care

Term	Definition	Why is it important?
Treatment plan	A plan with information about a person's disease, treatment options and goals, possible side effects of treatment and how long a treatment will take. ¹	<p>There are different treatment choices for SCLC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First-line therapy is the first treatment given for a disease; examples include chemotherapy and radiation therapy.¹⁵• Second-line therapy is given if the first treatment option used does not work or stops working.¹⁵ <p>A doctor will usually suggest second-line therapy options if disease spreads after initial treatment and progresses to extensive-stage, or if the person receiving treatment experiences a sensitivity to the medicine.¹⁵</p>

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