



MANAGING TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS: A DETAILED DAILY CHECKLIST

A practical tool for patients and caregivers navigating lung cancer treatment

Disclaimer: This provides general information and is not medical, legal, or financial advice. Always consult your healthcare providers, insurer, or attorney for guidance specific to your situation.

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Clear Information. Compassionate Support.

Lung cancer treatment—whether surgery, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, or radiation—can bring physical and emotional side effects that fluctuate day by day. Staying ahead of symptoms can make treatment more manageable, prevent complications, and keep your care team fully informed.

This checklist is designed to be used every day. Many patients and caregivers keep it:

- Printed and stored in a binder with medical documents
- On the refrigerator or nightstand
- In a treatment bag brought to appointments
- In a digital note shared between patient and caregiver

Tracking symptoms routinely helps you identify patterns, communicate clearly with your medical team, and act quickly if something changes. Even small symptoms matter, and your care team wants to know about them.

DAILY SIDE EFFECTS **CHECKLIST**

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

Lung cancer treatment commonly causes fatigue that isn't relieved by sleep. Use this section to monitor energy levels and prevent exhaustion.

- Prioritize rest and allow short naps as needed
- Pace activities; break tasks into smaller steps
- Avoid pushing through severe fatigue
- Engage in gentle movement (walking or stretching) as tolerated
- Keep a consistent bedtime and wake time
- Track times of day when energy is best/worst
- Note any sudden changes in fatigue level (report these)

NAUSEA, VOMITING & APPETITE CHANGES

Nausea can be triggered by treatment, medications, smells, or stress. Appetite changes are also common.

- Eat small, frequent meals instead of large ones
- Keep bland foods on hand (toast, bananas, crackers, oatmeal)
- Sip fluids throughout the day to prevent dehydration
- Use electrolyte drinks if appetite is low
- Take anti-nausea medications as prescribed—don't skip doses
- Avoid strong odors, greasy foods, or heavy meals
- Track which foods worsen or improve symptoms
- Alert your care team if vomiting is severe or persistent

BREATHING & SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Breathing changes should always be monitored closely during lung cancer treatment.

- Use prescribed inhalers, oxygen, or nebulizers exactly as directed
- Sit upright or use extra pillows to ease breathing
- Avoid smoke, perfumes, cleaning products, and other airway irritants
- Note when shortness of breath occurs (e.g., after activity, at rest)
- Track whether symptoms worsen over time
- Call your care team immediately for sudden or severe breathlessness

COUGH, CONGESTION & MUCUS CHANGES

Treatment can increase coughing or change mucus thickness, color, or frequency.

- Track daily cough patterns (dry, productive, frequency)
- Stay well-hydrated to thin mucus
- Use approved cough medications as directed
- Note any blood in mucus and contact your doctor immediately
- Use a humidifier if recommended
- Avoid cold air, dust, smoke, and pollution

PAIN & DISCOMFORT

Pain may come from surgery, tumors, inflammation, or treatment side effects.

- Take pain medication exactly as prescribed—do not adjust doses yourself
- Track where pain occurs, when it worsens, and what relieves it
- Use warm or cool packs if recommended
- Try gentle stretching or light movement to reduce stiffness
- Report any new or worsening pain promptly
- Seek urgent care for severe or sudden pain as advised by your care team

SKIN & RADIATION REACTIONS

Radiation and certain medications can cause skin sensitivity or irritation.

- Keep the treated area clean and dry
- Moisturize with approved, unscented products
- Avoid harsh soaps, alcohol-based products, and exfoliators
- Protect skin from sunlight
- Wear soft, loose-fitting clothing
- Monitor for redness, peeling, blistering, or swelling
- Report any significant skin reaction to your care team

MEDICATION SIDE EFFECTS

Every cancer medication has its own side effect profile—tracking symptoms helps your team personalize treatment.

- Note any new symptoms after starting a medication
- Report unusual reactions (rash, swelling, vision changes, dizziness)
- Keep a list of all medications, doses, and schedules
- Never stop a medication without your doctor's approval
- Ask about alternatives if side effects become unmanageable

EMOTIONAL & COGNITIVE CHANGES

Emotional reactions are common—not a sign of weakness.

- Monitor mood, anxiety, and mental clarity
- Note changes in concentration or memory (“chemo brain”)
- Stay connected with supportive friends or communities
- Use grounding exercises, meditation apps, or quiet time when needed
- Talk to a counselor or oncology social worker if overwhelmed
- Report persistent depression, panic, or mood changes

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY

Call your care team—or seek emergency care—if you notice:

- Sudden or severe shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Persistent vomiting preventing hydration
- High fever (e.g., 100.4°F/38°C or higher)
- Signs of infection (chills, redness, swelling)
- Confusion, sudden mood changes, or difficulty waking
- Uncontrolled bleeding or bruising
- Swelling in the legs, face, or neck

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Managing side effects is a critical part of lung cancer care, and no one should feel they have to navigate this alone. This checklist is meant to help you stay organized, recognize changes early, and communicate clearly with your medical team. Every symptom, big or small, matters, and keeping track of them can make treatment safer and more manageable.

Share this checklist with caregivers, bring it to appointments, and use it to guide conversations with your oncology team. If something doesn't feel right or symptoms begin to change, reach out to your provider without hesitation. Your health, comfort, and safety are top priorities, and support is available at every step.

You are not expected to remember everything or manage every side effect perfectly. What matters is staying aware, staying informed, and knowing when to ask for help. This tool is here to support you—one day, one symptom, one step at a time.