



## The Most Surprising Symptoms of Lung Cancer

Each year, more than 225,000 Americans are diagnosed with lung cancer for the first time. Unfortunately, the condition can be hard to spot early because symptoms often don't show up until the cancer is in later stages. [Early detection is important to help improve survival.](#)

While you may know some lung cancer symptoms, like coughing or shortness of breath, other symptoms can show up in surprising places. Learn about these symptoms for better awareness and protection of your long-term health.

### Swollen-Looking Fingertips

Some lung cancer tumors create chemicals that affect different areas of your body, right down to your fingertips. One effect causes fluid to gather at the tips of your fingers, making the area above the top knuckle look swollen. This symptom is called "clubbing."

Though clubbing is not common, 80 percent of people who have it have lung cancer.

### Muscle Weakness

In some types of small cell lung cancer, the body's immune system tries to fight the cancer. Unfortunately, immune cells can end up destroying nerve endings instead.

The nerve endings that are attacked are responsible for muscle contractions. When they're damaged, you can't properly use your muscles, leading to muscle weakness. This condition is called Lambert-Eaton myasthenic syndrome. While it can be caused by other conditions, about 50 to 60 percent of people with the syndrome have lung cancer.

### Back or Shoulder Pain

Some types of lung cancer tumors stay high in the lungs and can spread to the ribs and spine, causing pain in your upper back and shoulders. But back and shoulder pain is a very common problem with many causes. Back pain alone is not a strong sign of cancer.

### Weight Gain or Loss

It's confusing, but cancer can make you gain or lose weight. Sometimes chemicals from tumors can cause your body to retain fluids. This can make your weight increase, sometimes rapidly, due to extra water.

In other types of cancer, chemicals can cause you to lose your appetite. Without trying, you may lose weight and continue to lose weight to the point you become underweight.

Talk to your doctor if you have any unexplained changes in your weight.

### Fatigue

Like many cancers, lung cancer can lower your red blood cell count, causing anemia. Red blood cells carry oxygen throughout your body. Without oxygen, your body can feel weak and tired.

There are many causes of fatigue and anemia. But it's important to see your doctor if you experience symptoms of anemia as it can impact your quality of life and overall health.

#### Racing Heart

Cancer-related anemia can also cause your heart to beat differently. You may have a very fast or irregular heartbeat.

People with cancer may also develop high levels of calcium in their body, called hypercalcemia. Hypercalcemia can also affect your heart rate, putting you at risk for heart attack or even coma.

While cancer isn't the only cause of a racing heart, many causes are serious. Always talk to your doctor about changes in your heart rate.

#### Screenings to Support Your Peace of Mind

At AdventHealth, we offer lung cancer screenings for people who are at higher risk of lung cancer, like smokers. [Learn if a lung cancer screening may be right for you.](#)

If you're diagnosed with lung cancer, we provide advanced, evidence-based treatments that offer hope for the future. From radiation therapy to immunotherapy, you'll receive the latest treatments and compassionate care from our team of experts. To learn more about our lung cancer care at AdventHealth, visit [LungHealthProgram.com](https://www.adventhealth.com/programs/lung-health-program)