Surgery for Lung Cancer

Surgery can be done to both diagnose and treat lung cancer. In most cases, surgery is used if the cancer is found in an early stage. You will need to prepare. Work with your doctor to learn more about what to expect before, during, and after surgery.

Mediastinoscopy

A mediastinoscopy can provide a tissue sample that’s used for staging. During this procedure, the doctor inserts a scope through a small incision made in the neck. By looking through the scope, he or she can see lymph nodes. Lymph nodes may be removed and tested. If no cancer is found in them, you may have further surgery (see below). If cancer has spread to the lymph nodes, more surgery probably won’t be done.

Surgery

The goal of surgery is to remove visible areas of cancer. This often requires taking out all or part of a lung. If the cancer is found in an early stage, surgery may cure it. Your doctor will consider the tumor’s size and location in deciding how much of the lung to remove. As with any surgery that uses general anesthesia (makes you sleep), you will be connected to a machine that breathes for you during the procedure.

Risks and Complications

Lung surgery has certain risks and possible complications. These include:

- Risks of general anesthesia
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Air leaking through the lung wall
- Heart problems
- Blood clots in the legs

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