Surgical Procedures for Lung Cancer

by Debra Wood, RN

En Español (Spanish Version)

Surgical Removal of the Lung or Portions of the Lung

Surgery is used to remove the cancer cells from the lungs. It is primarily used for early stage lung cancer, but can sometimes be used in more advanced stages of the disease following chemotherapy or combined chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

The doctor may remove a small part of the lung (a wedge resection), an entire lobe of the lung (lobectomy), or the entire lung (pneumonectomy). The amount of lung removed depends on several factors, including the size and location of the tumor, whether lymph nodes have cancer in them, and how well the lungs are functioning. Not all lung cancers are amenable to surgery, and some are initially treated with chemotherapy and radiation rather than surgery.

Thoracotomy With Resection

A thoracotomy is a surgical method for opening the chest wall in order to access the lungs. The surgeon makes an incision along the back in a C-shaped manner, and the chest wall is opened. The surgeon removes the tissue and/or tumor from the lungs or works with other structures in the chest as necessary. So the lungs will re-inflate after surgery, one or more catheters (chest tubes) are inserted to drain air and blood from the space between the lungs and chest wall.

REFERENCES:


Last reviewed September 2011 by Igor Puzanov, MD
Last Updated: 9/1/2011