

Helping you cope with asbestos lung cancer

“Treatment has  
come a long way  
in the past decade”



# About this booklet

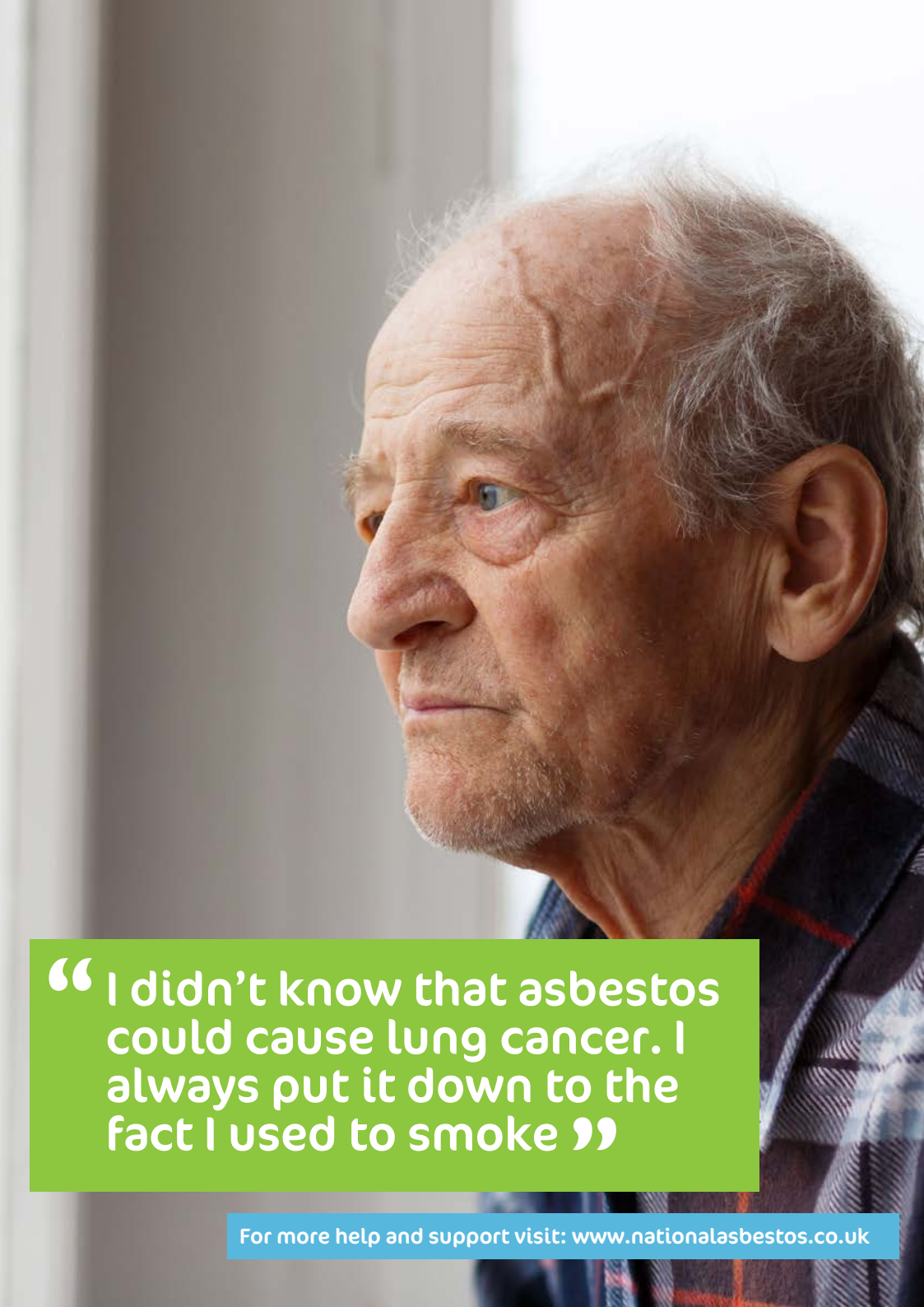
Lung cancer affects more than 43,000 people a year in the UK, but its treatment has advanced considerably in the past 10 years and patients are living longer with the disease.

This booklet aims to help people who have been diagnosed with lung cancer and suspect that it may have been caused by exposure to high levels of asbestos dust and fibres within the past 10 to 50 years. It is estimated that more than 2,500 people develop asbestos-related lung cancer in the UK every year, but the actual figure could be considerably higher.

If you have been exposed to asbestos dust and fibres, it is important that you and your family take advice at the earliest opportunity.

Establishing that asbestos has contributed to your lung cancer will make a big difference because there are government benefits and compensation available to help you and your family.

This booklet will give you, your family and your friends some important information about asbestos-related lung cancer. It is also a stepping stone to more medical, financial and emotional help, which you can call on when you are ready.



**“ I didn’t know that asbestos could cause lung cancer. I always put it down to the fact I used to smoke ”**

For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)

“ I just needed someone to explain what was happening to me ”



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# What is lung cancer?

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Lung cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in the UK. It is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells, which do not develop into healthy lung tissue, and divide rapidly to form tumours.

Smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer but there are other recognised causes, such as exposure to asbestos dust and fibres.

Lung cancer is more common in older people and is rarely found in people under 40-years-old.

## How does asbestos cause lung cancer?

Inhaled asbestos fibres become trapped in the lungs. Over long periods of time, the fibres accumulate and cause inflammation and damage to the lungs. After many years, often decades, the asbestos fibres cause enough irritation and cellular damage to generate tumours.

Research has found a clear association between high levels of asbestos dust exposure and the risk of lung cancer. The exposure has to be regular and over a long period of time.

It can be difficult to attribute lung cancer to asbestos exposure. If the sufferer is a smoker it is assumed that smoking is the cause and the asbestos exposure is missed.

Smokers who have been exposed to high amounts of asbestos dust over a significant period of time have a much greater risk of developing lung cancer. The two toxins (tobacco and asbestos) have a multiplicative effect on the risk, and the higher the concentration of asbestos fibres, the higher the risk of lung cancer.

## What are the symptoms?

In many cases lung cancer is discovered incidentally through an abnormal X-ray. A person may have sought medical help for an unrelated ailment or has been unable to recover from a chest infection or cough.

Following diagnosis the patient may not show any significant symptoms, even if the lung cancer is at an advanced stage.

Common symptoms that a patient may develop include:

- Persistent coughing
- Feeling breathless
- Chest pain
- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Night sweats
- Coughing up blood

# What are the treatments?

In the past decade there have been significant advances in lung cancer treatment. No matter what stage the lung cancer has reached, a specialist consultant will be keen to discuss the patient's options and to put together a treatment plan.

## Clinical trials

Lung cancer is one of the most difficult cancers to treat but survival rates are constantly improving.

Cancer research is advancing quickly and when a patient begins to discuss treatment, we recommend that they ask about current clinical trials.

Each person and every cancer is different, a specialist will put a patient forward for a clinical trial only when medically appropriate.

## Treatment approach

Depending on a detailed assessment of the patient's fitness and the cancer, treatment can take the form of 'radical intent' or 'palliative intent'.

**Radical intent** aims to cure the lung cancer or prolong survival, with minimal undesirable long-term consequences for a patient.

**Palliative intent** aims to control the cancer, reduce symptoms, and improve the patient's quality of life. It is important to remember that a treatment plan based on palliative intent can still significantly prolong survival.

Both these approaches will combine a number of different treatments.

## Main treatments

The main lung cancer treatments are:

**Surgery:** can vary from keyhole procedures, to removing part of the lung containing the tumour, which is known as a lobectomy.

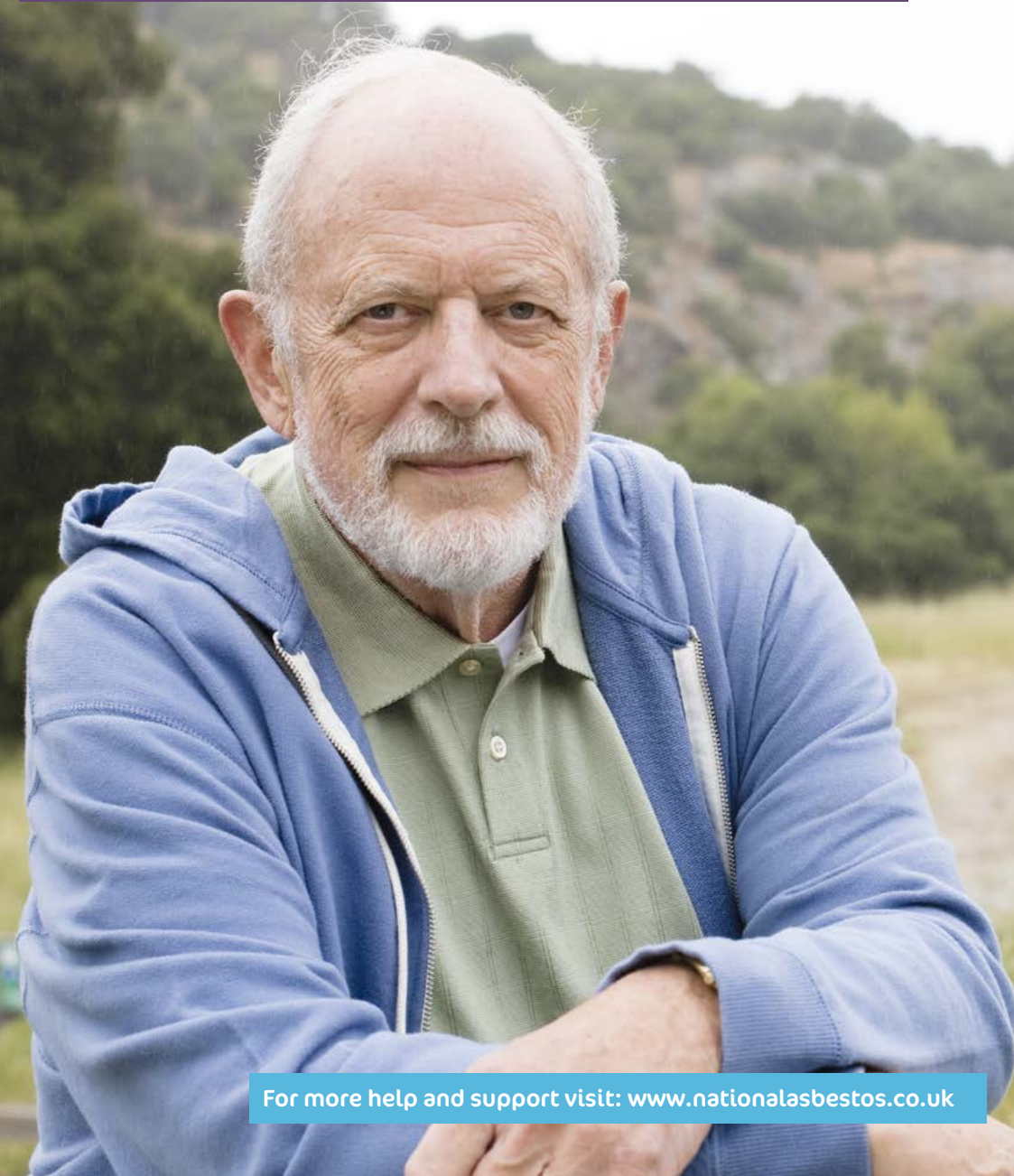
Whilst surgery remains the best chance for a cure, other treatment options are becoming nearly as effective in treating lung cancer.

**Radiotherapy:** cancer cells are destroyed using high-energy X-rays. This helps with symptoms and supports other treatments to stop potential spreading.

**Chemotherapy:** a course of drugs is used to kill cancer cells and slow their growth. In the past this treatment was associated with severe side effects, but modern treatments combine effectiveness with minimal side effects, which are controlled with medication.

**Pain control:** has also advanced considerably over the past decade and modern treatments can very effectively control pain and discomfort.

“Knowing what you face  
is half the battle”



For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)

“ I was able to find practical  
and emotional help for me  
– and for my family ”



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# Don't go it alone

There are lots of wonderful people who can offer help, advice and guidance. They can deal with your immediate needs and prepare you and your loved-ones for the future.

You will be assigned a specialist lung cancer nurse. Talk to them about lung cancer, its care, treatments and the help available.

Contact your council's social services department about a carer's assessment. They may be able to offer practical assistance in your home as well as financial support and benefits. There are also private care organisations that can assist.

It may be important that your wishes for the future are recorded in a will. It is a way of making a difficult time easier for friends and family by giving them certainty and telling them how you would like them to honour and remember your life.

Whether it is practical help, care at home or just someone to talk to who knows what it's like, we can put you in touch with some amazing charities and organisations who are ready to help.

Maggie's Centres

Macmillan Cancer Support

The British Lung Foundation

Roy Castle Lung Cancer  
Foundation

Cancer Research UK

Carers Trust

Carers UK

Veterans UK

SSFA

Age UK

**“ Just to talk to someone  
who knows what you’re  
going through is a relief ”**

For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)



“ On top of everything else, you don't need money worries ”

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# Financial Assistance

After working all your life, accepting financial assistance and benefits can make a person feel ill at ease.

But you have earned the right to financial support and it will help at a time when you don't need to add money to your worries.

**We can investigate your eligibility and apply for important benefits available to people who have been diagnosed with asbestos lung cancer:**

- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), which helps people who are ill or disabled from an accident or disease caused by work.
- Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 could help some people if their former employer no longer exists.
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) are there to assist those with long term ill health.
- Attendance Allowance helps pay for personal care for those aged 65 or over.
- Carer's Allowance for family or friends looking after you.
- War Pensions Scheme is for people exposed to asbestos during military service.

# Compensation

Asbestos lung cancer sufferers may be able to take legal action to claim compensation for exposure to the toxic asbestos dust. This isn't about blame or a claims culture. It's about what is right.

You have worked hard all of your life and you are owed financial peace of mind so you can meet your own needs now and prepare for your family's future.

## What should happen:

It is very important to work with a solicitor experienced in asbestos cases. A specialist solicitor will shoulder the burden and let you and your family focus on your time together.

One of the most important aspects is to ensure that a solicitor records evidence into witness statements as soon as possible. This ensures evidence is preserved.

Whenever possible, the solicitor should visit and talk to you in the comfort of your own home or in a familiar place.

To legally prove that your lung cancer was caused by asbestos dust it must be established that:

- you have asbestosis, and / or,
- the amount of asbestos that you have been exposed to is above recognised limits, and / or,
- the number of asbestos fibres in your lungs is above recognised limits.

There is a specialist Fast Track compensation procedure for these claims. Once a claim has begun, the court asks why judgment should not be given.

If there is no credible defence, judgment will be given and you may be awarded £50,000 as an interim payment (payment on account).

Your solicitor should also handle separate claims for government benefits including Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit, which is more than £600 per month.

Also, you may be entitled to a lump sum payment from the government under the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979. This is payable where the companies are not trading, and it can be a significant amount which is paid quickly by the government.

Lung cancer can be a terminal illness. Where asbestos is believed to be a cause, the coroner must be involved and a post mortem examination undertaken. This is necessary to establish beyond doubt that your lung cancer was caused by asbestos. If you make your wishes clear now, it will be easier for your family to know that they are doing the right thing.

**For more information about compensation claims contact The National Asbestos Helpline.**

**Helpline:** 0808 274 9185 **Email:** [enquiries@nationalasbestos.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalasbestos.co.uk) **Website:** [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)



“ It’s about principles, responsibility and acknowledging that we’ve been hurt ”

For more help and support visit: [www.nationalasbestos.co.uk](http://www.nationalasbestos.co.uk)

We are proud supporters of

*maggie's*

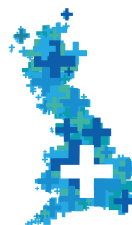
Maggie's offers practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends. Maggie Keswick Jencks Cancer Caring Centres Trust (Maggie's) is a registered charity, No. SC024414



Association of Respiratory  
Nurse Specialists

For more information about compensation claims contact  
The National Asbestos Helpline.

**Freephone 0808 274 9185**



**National  
Asbestos  
Helpline**

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