

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

×



Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Treatment for Lung Cancer](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)



Thoracic surgeon Gaetano Rocco will work with a team of experts to create a treatment plan tailored to your unique needs.

**Request an Appointment**

Call [646-497-9163](tel:646-497-9163)

Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

[Make an Appointment](#)

The goal of surgery for lung cancer is to remove all the cancer. We remove the part of the lung that has cancer and the nearby lymph nodes (also called lymph glands). At Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, your surgeon's top priority is your safety. We also make sure you have a good quality of life after surgery.

---

At MSK, more than 90% of lung cancer surgeries for early-stage disease use minimally invasive approaches such as video-assisted thoracic surgery (VATS) and robotic-assisted surgery.

---

As a surgical patient at MSK, you will be cared for by one of the country's most experienced lung cancer teams. Our surgeons perform more than 1,200 lung cancer operations each year. Our patients have among the lowest complication rates after surgery in the country.

VIDEO | 02:39

Chief of Thoracic Surgery David Jones, who specializes in treating people with cancer of the lung, esophagus, and pleural lining, discusses the speed and quality of our care.

[Video Details](#) →

VIDEO | 02:00

Thoracic surgeon James Huang discusses how minimally invasive, video-assisted, and robotic surgical techniques improve the treatment of patients with lung, esophageal, and thyroid cancers.

[Video Details](#) →

VIDEO | 02:11

Thoracic surgeon Bernard Park discusses how MSK specialists use minimally invasive approaches and robotic-assisted surgery to do complex cancer surgeries many places won't even attempt using conventional methods.

[Video Details](#) →

VIDEO | 03:00

Thoracic surgeon Valerie Rusch – one of the first women to be board certified in this subspecialty – discusses the multidisciplinary care plan that is developed for each patient by a specialized team of physicians at Memorial Sloan Kettering.

[Video Details](#) →

◀ MSK is an NCI-designated cancer center, which means it meets the strict standards of the National Cancer Institute. For all cancer stages, people treated for lung cancer at centers like MSK have better survival rates compared with national benchmarks. ▶

Our surgeons' goal is to spare the lung. They will remove the cancer and save the rest of the lung tissue whenever possible. When possible, we recommend methods that are less invasive. Minimally invasive surgery uses small incisions (cuts) and few stitches, with less damage to nearby tissue. At MSK, more than 3 out of 4 lung cancer resections (tumor removals) use minimally invasive procedures. This can help speed recovery, and it means fewer complications.

## Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer Treatment

Some people have non-small cell lung cancer that is only in 1 lung. The best chance for a cure is surgery to completely remove the tumor. This procedure is called a lobectomy. It is the most common type of operation for people who have this kind of lung cancer. For some people with early-stage non-small cell lung cancer, surgery may not be the best option. We may recommend [stereotactic body radiation therapy](#). This treatment can remove small lung lesions.

Some people have advanced non-small cell lung cancer that has spread to the lymph nodes. However, it is still only in the chest. Surgery may not be an option because of the tumor's location or your general health. We may recommend [radiation therapy](#). It's best given with [chemotherapy](#).

## Small Cell Lung Cancer Treatment

Surgery is rarely part of the treatment plan for small cell lung cancer. The disease can spread quickly and responds well to chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Sometimes, surgery to remove small cell tumors is an option, especially if the cancer is found early. MSK surgeons are skilled in removing small tumors. This includes both small tumors near the outside of the lung, and ones that have not spread beyond the lung.

Patients who can have surgery for small cell lung cancer usually get adjuvant chemotherapy. This is chemotherapy given after surgery. This approach improves cure rates compared with having surgery only.

## Types of Lung Cancer Surgery

+

### Minimally Invasive Surgery for Lung Cancer

Today, most lung cancer operations use minimally invasive surgery. Minimally invasive surgery uses small incisions (cuts) and few stitches. It lets surgeons remove all the cancer, with less damage to nearby tissue. This method helps speed recovery and reduce complications. It can help people with other health conditions that make traditional surgical procedures too risky.

At MSK, more than 3 out of 4 lung cancer resections (tumor removals) use minimally invasive surgery. These include thoracoscopy (also called Video-Assisted Thoracic Surgery, or VATS) and robot-assisted surgery. MSK surgeons helped develop these minimally invasive methods. MSK does more than 440 minimally invasive surgeries each year, making it one of the busiest cancer centers for these procedures.



#### Sandra's Story: How Minimally Invasive Surgery Maximizes Recovery from Lung Cancer

Meet Sandra Lowe, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in February 2021 and was treated successfully at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

[Learn more](#)

Video Assisted Thoracic Surgery (VATS)

+

Robotic Surgery (Robot-Assisted Surgery)

+

PREVIOUS

[Treatment for Lung Cancer](#)

NEXT

[Chemotherapy for Lung Cancer](#)

[Communication preferences](#)

[Cookie preferences](#)

[Legal disclaimer](#)

[Accessibility statement](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Price transparency](#)

[Public notices](#)

© 2024 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center