

Advancements in Minimally Invasive Lung Surgery Return Patients Back to Their Lives Sooner, with Quicker Recovery

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Lung cancer screenings are the single most important way to safely and quickly tell if you are at risk for lung cancer if you are or were a former smoker. A quick scan can determine if you have lung nodules. Just because you have a lung nodule doesn't mean you have lung cancer. In fact, many nodules are not cancerous and are considered benign. Those we just continue to watch over time.

However, should a lung nodule come back cancerous, the team at MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center has the most advanced lung surgery available for treatment of lung cancer surgery, right in your own backyard. In addition, a team of specialists review each of our patients' unique cases at great length to ensure the best course of treatment is determined for each patient.

Historically, lung surgery was complex and very difficult for patients to recover from, forcing many patients to have to put their life on hold. The standard operation for lung cancer used to be an open thoracotomy, meaning the physician would make an incision in the chest wall between the ribs to get to the lungs. Because of this large incision, patients would typically be hospitalized for an additional seven to 10 days in the hospital and take three to six months to fully recover.

Thankfully, there are new, minimally invasive lung surgery procedures to avoid long hospitalization and recovery times to help patients get back to their lives quicker. I am one of a handful of physicians in Orange County that specializes in these minimally invasive approaches.

With robotic lung cancer surgery, recovery time is significantly reduced. I make an incision that is only eight to 10 millimeters wide, just big enough to insert a robotic camera and instruments.

Once the camera and instruments are in position, I have a live video feed to help me navigate with precision to the patient's lung and can remove the tumor with ease. There is a parachute-type bag that ensures the tumor doesn't spread, spill or touch any other organ. The entire surgery only takes an average of one and a half to two hours.

Most of my minimally invasive robotic lung surgery patients are only hospitalized two to three nights and can resume normal everyday activities two to three weeks after hospitalization. Some of them don't even feel the need to take pain medication.

One of the greatest benefits of this minimally invasive lung surgery, is the ability to help older adults in their 70s and 80s, who otherwise may not be healthy enough to withstand an "open surgery" or have other health complications.

The procedure's positive impact would not be possible without the efforts of the entire team at MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center's Cancer Institute. Our care team educates our patients before and after surgery to provide them with quality, compassionate care personalized to their situation.

To learn more about this procedure or our lung treatment program, visit memorialcare.org/lungcancertreatmentprogram or call (949) 679-6874.



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