

Media Contacts: Merck Media Relations Kelly Wighton
1-833-906-3725 (647) 245-7625

Merck Canada and Guy Lafleur Team Up Against Lung Cancer

Campaign for Lung Cancer Awareness Month aims to empower Canadians to be the MVP in the fight against lung cancer

KIRKLAND, QC, November 8, 2021 – In the face-off against lung cancer, early detection is key. That’s why Merck Canada and former hockey player Guy Lafleur are teaming up to launch *Be the MVP*, a new public awareness campaign marking Lung Cancer Awareness Month in November, with support from a network of Canadian lung health advocacy organizations including: Lung Cancer Canada, the Lung Health Foundation, L’Association pulmonaire du Québec, Coalition Priorité Cancer au Québec and the Canadian Lung Association. The campaign aims to empower Canadians to take charge of their health by learning the symptoms and risk factors of lung cancer, which can help to gain an advantage on the disease through earlier diagnosis.

Late-stage diagnosis a challenge for Canadians facing lung cancer

When former NHL player and hockey legend, Guy Lafleur, was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2019, fans and former teammates rallied in support, giving him strength in the fight against the disease. By lending his voice to the *Be the MVP* campaign, Guy intends to extend the same support to those who may be at risk for lung cancer.

“As they say, the best defence is a good offence, and it’s the same with your health. When I was diagnosed, it was completely unexpected. I didn’t think I was at risk, but now, I am incredibly grateful to my team of healthcare professionals and loved ones who have supported me through every step of this journey,” said Guy Lafleur. “I wanted to be a part of this campaign because I hope Canadians will hear my story and find the strength and courage to talk to their doctor if they’re at risk. That’s what I’m passionate about – getting more people aware of the symptoms and risk factors so they can talk to their doctor as soon as possible. This way they can get right to the game plan of their disease.”

More Canadians are diagnosed with lung cancer than any other type of cancer,¹ with over 20,000 estimated deaths in 2020¹ – more than the deaths caused by colorectal, pancreatic and breast cancer combined.² In fact, half of lung cancer cases in Canada are diagnosed in stage 4.² This can make lung cancer more difficult to treat, resulting in poor prognosis and one of the lowest survival rates of all types of cancer.²

Early detection a possibility through patient empowerment

From smoking habits, to personal and family medical history, to exposure to chemicals, there are a number of contributing factors that may increase one’s risk of lung cancer.³ Early on, people with lung cancer may not have any symptoms, or they may not realize that their symptoms are caused by lung cancer. Knowing the symptoms, and when to speak up, could make the difference for Canadians and their loved ones. Some common symptoms⁴ associated with lung cancer include a cough that doesn’t go away, shortness of breath and constant chest pains that get worse when you breathe deeply.

“The unfortunate reality for too many Canadians and their loved ones, is that lung cancer isn’t getting diagnosed early enough. We take our mission to save and improve lives very seriously, so we’re thrilled to partner with Mr. Lafleur, whose story resonates with so many, to help raise awareness,” said Marwan Akar, President and Managing Director, Merck Canada.

Visit [BETHEMVP.ca](https://www.bethemvp.ca) to learn more about the symptoms and risk factors of lung cancer and to download a guide for speaking with your doctor. For more resources and information, visit: [Lung Cancer Canada](#), [The Lung Health Foundation](#), [l'Association pulmonaire du Québec](#), [Coalition Priorité Cancer au Québec](#) and [The Canadian Lung Association](#).

About Merck

For more than 130 years, Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases in pursuit of our mission to save and improve lives. We demonstrate our commitment to patients and population health by increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, Merck continues to be at the forefront of research to prevent and treat diseases that threaten people and animals – including cancer, infectious diseases such as HIV and Ebola, and emerging animal diseases – as we aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world.

In Canada, Merck markets a broad range of vaccines, pharmaceutical and animal health products and is one of the top R&D investors in Canada, with investments totaling \$93.58 million in 2020 and more than \$1.3 billion since 2000. Based in Kirkland, Québec, Merck employs approximately 592 people across the country. For more information about our operations in Canada, visit www.merck.ca and connect with us on [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#) @MerckCanada.

References

¹ Canadian Cancer Society, Lung Cancer Statistics: <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/lung/statistics>

² Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Cancer Statistics: A 2020 special report on lung cancer, Introduction, p. 8:

³ Canadian Cancer Society. Risk factors for lung cancer. Available at: <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/lung/risks>. Accessed March 23, 2021.

⁴ Canadian Cancer Society. Symptoms of lung cancer. Available at: <http://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/lung/signs-and-symptoms>. Accessed March 23, 2021.