

Lymphoma: Diagnosis and Treatment

What is lymphoma?

Lymphoma is a cancer that affects your lymph nodes. Lymph nodes are small bean-shaped bumps under the skin. They are normally found all over your body, including your neck, armpits, and groin. Lymph nodes help your body to fight disease. There are many types of lymphoma that are usually classified as non-Hodgkin lymphoma or Hodgkin lymphoma.

Who gets lymphoma?

Anyone can get it, but it is most common in younger adults (20s to 30s) and those older than 60. Men are at higher risk. So are patients of either sex who smoke or are obese.

What signs should I look for?

Lymphoma usually causes swelling of the lymph nodes. The neck and armpit are most often affected. You may see a larger than normal bump in these areas. The areas may, but not always, be painful to touch. You may also feel tired, have unexplained sweating at night (e.g., where you soak through your sheets and clothes), or unexplained weight loss.

How do I know I have it?

If your doctor suspects lymphoma, they may order blood tests or imaging studies. They may take a small sample of the swollen lymph node and look at it under a microscope. This is called a biopsy.

How is it treated?

It depends on the type of cells your doctor finds during testing. Almost always, treatment uses intravenous medicines called chemotherapy and radiation therapy. For these treatments, a machine is used to help destroy the cancer cells.

Can it be cured?

Lymphoma can be effectively treated. Seven out of 10 people with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and four out of five people with Hodgkin lymphoma are alive five years after diagnosis.

Do I still need to go to the doctor after it is cured?

Yes. It can return even after it is cured. You can also have unwanted side effects from the medicines and radiation. See your doctor regularly to help monitor your health.

Where can I find more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Information Resource

<https://familydoctor.org/condition/non-hodgkin-lymphoma/>

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

<https://www.lls.org>

National Cancer Institute

<https://www.cancer.gov>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

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