



Hodgkin
Lymphoma
HL



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one has been diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma (HL). What does it mean and how will it affect you?

This fact sheet will help you:

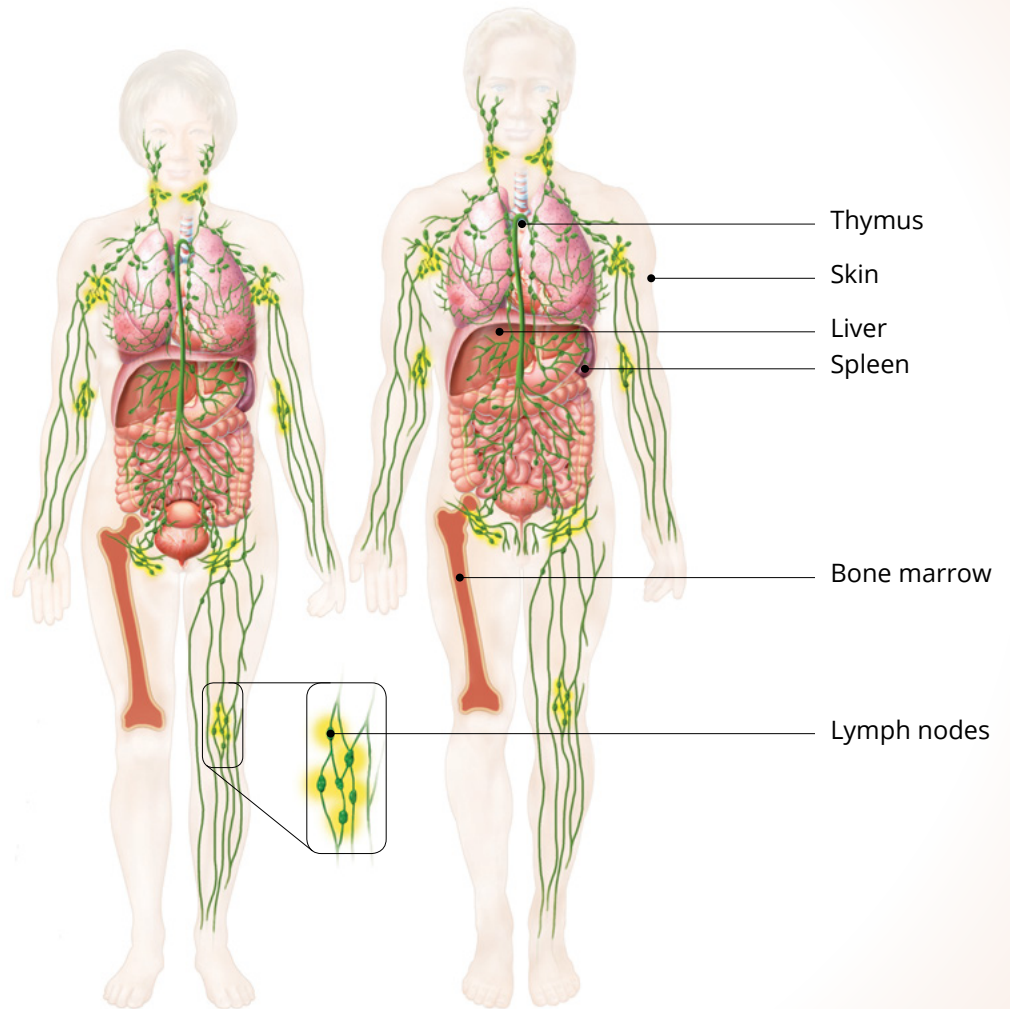
Learn about Hodgkin lymphoma and how it is diagnosed

Get an overview of treatment options

Understand what happens next

About lymphoma

Lymphoma is cancer of the lymphatic system, which includes your bone marrow, lymph nodes, thymus, liver, skin, and spleen. Your lymphatic system defends your body against infection by creating white blood cells called **lymphocytes**. If these cells become abnormal, you may develop lymphoma.



What is lymphoma?

Lymphoma is the name for a group of cancers that develop in your lymphatic system. The two main types are Hodgkin lymphoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

About Hodgkin lymphoma

- Hodgkin lymphoma produces many abnormal lymphocytes (large cancerous cells called Hodgkin Reed-Sternberg cells).
- These cause tumours in the lymph nodes and other parts of the body.
- The cells became cancerous because of changes in the DNA, or genetic code, of a normal lymphocyte.
- Hodgkin lymphoma involves lymph nodes, but can also involve other organs, such as the lungs and bone marrow.
- Hodgkin lymphoma is one of the most curable forms of cancer.

Signs and symptoms

The signs and symptoms of HL can be similar to other less serious diseases. Some people have no symptoms, and their disease is uncovered during a routine medical examination. The most common and early sign of HL is painless swelling in one or more of your lymph nodes.

You may experience:

- Large masses in the upper part of the body, usually in the neck or upper chest
 - When your lymph nodes are enlarged or swollen
- Fatigue and shortness of breath
 - When your body is using more energy
- Fevers and drenching night sweats
 - Possibly a response from your immune system
- Weight loss
 - When you are eating less or using more energy
- Generalized skin itchiness
 - This is a less frequent symptom

After your diagnosis

With your diagnosis, your doctor can determine the right treatment for you. Your test results help your doctor recommend treatment options and predict how your Hodgkin lymphoma may respond to treatment.

Name of test	Description
Medical history and physical exam	Doctors review past illnesses, injuries, and symptoms. They examine your lungs, heart, and other organs.
Lymph node biopsy	A sample of the lymph node tissue is tested to confirm patterns of lymph node changes found in HL.
Blood tests	Blood tests assess your general organ function and may reflect the extent of your disease.
Imaging tests	Imaging tests like CT and PET scans take pictures that let your doctor see where your HL is, how it has spread, what size it is, and if other organs are involved.

Stages of HL

Identifying the stage of your disease is an important step to planning your treatment. In Hodgkin lymphoma, the stage refers to the number of lymph nodes that are affected, as well as their location in the body. It does not determine how well you will respond to treatment.

Your doctor will determine the stage of your disease using imaging, lab tests, and physical examination. This helps figure out:

- Which lymph nodes are larger than normal
- Whether your disease affects organs other than your lymph nodes
- If you have large masses of tumours

Stages

Stage I	involves swelling in one lymph node or in a group of adjacent nodes.
Stage II	involves two or more lymph nodes on the same side of your diaphragm.
Stage III	involves lymph nodes on both sides of your diaphragm.
Stage IV	is found in areas of the body beyond the lymph nodes, such as the lungs, spleen, liver, bones, or bone marrow.

Categories

The following letters may be added to your stage:

Category A	means you are showing no symptoms.
Category B	means you have symptoms like fevers, drenching night sweats, and unexpected weight loss.
Category E	means your lymphoma has spread to areas or organs outside of your lymph nodes or to tissues near your major lymphatic areas.
Category X	means your testing has shown large masses of lymphocytes (the term “bulky disease” is used when a single mass measures more than 10 cm).

Example

A diagnosis of **Stage IIB Hodgkin lymphoma** means your disease involves two or more lymph nodes near each other and you have fevers, night sweats, and/or weight loss.

Hodgkin lymphoma treatment

Your treatment is focused on destroying as many lymphoma cells as possible. When you no longer have evidence of lymphoma cells in your body, you are said to be in remission. Your treatment may result in **partial remission**, meaning that your tests still show evidence of HL.

Types of treatment

Combination chemotherapy	uses medicine (chemicals) to kill cancer cells. This process typically uses at least two chemotherapy drugs.
Radiation therapy	uses x-rays or high-energy rays to kill HL cells.
Combined modality therapy	uses both chemotherapy and radiation. This is a common treatment option for HL.

Factors that affect treatment

Discuss your treatment options with your doctor to make sure you understand the benefits and risks of each approach. Your treatment plan is based on:

- Age and overall health status
- HL subtype
- Stage

Treatment side effects

When you begin your treatment for Hodgkin lymphoma, you may experience mild to severe side effects, depending on your age, your overall health, and your treatment plan. Most side effects improve or resolve once your treatment ends. New drugs and therapies can help control side effects, such as nausea and vomiting. Speak to your doctor if you are experiencing side effects.

Common side effects

You may experience side effects such as:

- Nausea, vomiting, constipation, stomach acid reflux, bloating, hair loss, mouth sores, low energy levels, or pain in the vein(s) of the arm where the chemotherapy drugs were infused.
- Low blood cell counts and weakening of the immune system, which increases the risk of infections.
- Neuropathy, which is nerve damage from treatment that can make your fingers and toes feel numb or tingle.

Long-term or late effects of treatment

Medical follow-up is important after treatment for Hodgkin lymphoma. Once you complete your initial treatment, you will undergo more imaging tests to determine how your body has responded to treatment and whether further investigations or treatments are needed. If your scans show that your lymphoma is in remission, you will go for occasional follow-up visits, where your doctor will do a physical exam and blood tests.

- **Long-term side effects** are common and can last for months or years after treatment ends. One example is problems concentrating (also known as chemo brain).
- **Late effects** are medical problems that do not show up until years after treatment ends. See your doctor to get follow-up care for possible early detection of heart disease, secondary cancers, fertility issues, thyroid problems, trouble concentrating, and chronic fatigue.



Seek medical help if you are feeling “down” or “blue” or don’t want to do anything – and your mood does not improve over time. These could be signs of depression, an illness that should be treated even when you’re undergoing treatment for Hodgkin lymphoma. Treatment for depression has important benefits for people living with cancer. Remember, you are not alone.

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This publication was made possible thanks to the support of:



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