

Hodgkin Lymphoma

There are more than 35 subtypes of lymphoma, consisting of 5 types of Hodgkin lymphoma and over 30 types of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Lymphoma is the most common blood cancer and the third most common cancer of childhood.

What is Hodgkin lymphoma?

Hodgkin lymphoma (HL), also known as Hodgkin disease, is a less common form of lymphoma. Researchers know it is a cancer which arises from an abnormal lymphocyte (white blood cell). The overall five-year survival rate is 85 percent. Of the nearly 500,000 Americans with lymphoma, approximately 143,000 have HL. In 2008, approximately 8,220 new cases of HL will be diagnosed and 1,350 Americans will die from the disease. HL occurs mainly in young adults, with a peak occurrence between ages 16 and 34. Older patients, especially those over age 55, may also develop HL. The diagnosis of HL depends on having abnormal blood cells called Reed-Sternberg cells. Hodgkin lymphoma has been studied more than any other type of lymphoma. With the many rapid advances in diagnosis and treatment, over 80 percent of patients with HL can be cured.

How does Hodgkin lymphoma develop?

Hodgkin lymphoma usually starts in the lymph nodes. Since lymph tissues all over the body are connected, cancerous lymphocytes circulate throughout the lymphatic vessels. HL often spreads from one lymph node to another and can also spread to organs outside the lymph system. HL tends to spread more in sequence from one lymph node area to the next, as opposed to non-Hodgkin lymphoma which can skip around the body.

What are the warning signs?

While most people who have these complaints will not have HL, anyone with persistent symptoms should be seen by a doctor to make sure that lymphoma is not present: swelling of the lymph nodes which are often, but not always painless, fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, lack of energy.

What are the risk factors?

The causes of HL remain unknown, but immune system impairment and exposure to environmental carcinogens, pesticides, herbicides, viruses, and bacteria may play a role. There may be a higher risk for getting HL in individuals:

- Infected with the Epstein-Barr virus (which causes mononucleosis), or HIV;
- With a family history of HL (though no hereditary pattern has been well established).

How is Hodgkin lymphoma treated?

Most patients live long and healthy lives following successful treatment for HL. Many people treated will receive some form of chemotherapy, radiation therapy or a combination of the two. Bone marrow or stem cell transplantation may sometimes be used under special circumstances.

What's new in research?

Lymphoma is often called the “Rosetta Stone” of cancer research because it has helped unlock the mysteries of several other types of cancer. The Lymphoma Research Foundation funds some of the most cutting-edge research to find a cure for HL.

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The Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) offers a comprehensive series of patient education and support programs including:

- *Lymphoma Helpline & Clinical Trials Information Service*
- *Lymphoma Support Network*
- Patient Aid Grant Program
- Publications and newsletters
- Informational teleconferences and webcasts
- In-person conferences
- National Chapter Network

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Some promising research areas are:

- Determining the exact role of viruses in causing HL
- New antibody treatments, which act like guided missiles that zero in on specific targets (antigens) on the lymphoma cells
- Less toxic and lesser amounts of chemotherapy and radiotherapy (which are being explored due to the fact that even though the cure rate of HL is high, the current treatments themselves may have long-term toxic effects)

About LRF

The mission of the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) is to eradicate lymphoma and serve those touched by this disease. LRF is the nation's largest lymphoma-focused voluntary health organization devoted exclusively to funding lymphoma research and providing patients and healthcare professionals with critical information on the disease. Over 85 cents of every dollar spent goes to support research and education programming. People affected by lymphoma can receive free personalized information tailored to their diagnosis, help with finding a clinical trial, and easy-to-understand information on lymphoma, current treatments, and promising research. Please call 800-500-9976, email helpline@lymphoma.org, or visit the website www.lymphoma.org