



After a Lymphoma Diagnosis



Lymphoma is cancer that starts in lymph nodes and other cells of the lymphatic system (part of the body's immune system). It mostly affects white blood cells, which are the body's first defense against infections and diseases. If you have been told you have lymphoma, you've probably already had scans and x-rays, blood tests, and a biopsy (a test that takes some tissue or bone marrow to check for cancer). Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells to check for certain proteins and gene changes. You might also have other procedures to find out if the cancer has spread. These tests help your doctor know what type of lymphoma you have, what stage it is, and what treatment might help.

Types of lymphoma

There are 2 main types of lymphoma. Each type affects different kinds of white blood cells. They also have different treatments.

- **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL):** most common
- **Hodgkin lymphoma (HL):** much less common

Your treatment (and how that treatment works) will depend on the type and stage of your lymphoma. Your treatment options will also depend on your health and your personal preferences. Your doctor can tell you more about the type of lymphoma you have.

Treatment for lymphoma

There are many ways to treat lymphoma. Often, more than one type of treatment is needed.

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma

Some slow-growing tumors can be watched, and treatment might not need to be started right away.

Surgery can sometimes be done to remove a tumor. After surgery (or if surgery is not a safe option) treatment might include chemo, immunotherapy, and targeted therapy with or without radiation. Stem cell transplant might be another option.

Hodgkin lymphoma

Hodgkin lymphoma is often treated with radiation and medicines such as chemo. Sometimes, immunotherapy or stem cells are given.

Be sure to ask:

- What type of lymphoma do I have?
- Where is the lymphoma in my body?
- What stage is my lymphoma, and what does that mean?
- What else have you learned from my test results?
- Will I need more tests?
- What are my treatment options? What do you think is best for me and why?
- What is the goal of treatment?
- Are there clinical trials for my type of lymphoma?

What to expect during treatment

Your cancer care team will explain your treatment plan. This team may include different doctors, nurses, and other health care workers, depending on the type of treatment you need. For example, if you need radiation therapy, you will work with a radiation oncologist. They will tell you what to expect before, during, and after radiation treatment. If you need other types of treatment, your cancer care team will explain how it is given, help you get ready for it, keep track of how you're doing, and help you manage any side effects. You might also get blood tests, scans, or other tests at certain times to see how well your treatment is working.

Not everyone going through treatment for lymphoma has the same side effects. For example, the side effects of chemo are different from the side effects of radiation. And people getting the same treatment might have different side effects. However, many people getting treatment for lymphoma have a higher risk of infection since the immune system is weakened. You might be told to take extra care to avoid germs that cause infections, like staying out of crowds or wearing a face covering.

Be sure to ask:

- What side effects might I have, and what can I do about them?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- How often will I get treatment? How long will it last?
- Where will I go to get treatment? Can I drive myself?
- Will I be able to keep doing my usual activities, like work and exercise?

What to expect after treatment

After treatment, ask your cancer doctor for a treatment summary and follow-up plan. This is called a survivorship care plan. Your cancer doctor will work with your primary care doctor to check your general health and help you manage side effects from treatment. You will also have regular tests to check if your lymphoma has come back, or to check if a new cancer has started in a different part of your body.

For some people, lymphoma might not go away completely. They might continue to get treatment, and tests will still be needed to see how well it's working.

People who've had lymphoma are at risk of having it again or getting certain other types of cancer. Even if you feel fine after finishing treatment, it's important to ask your cancer care team about a regular schedule for follow-up tests to check if your lymphoma has come back.

Be sure to ask:

- Where can I get a copy of my treatment summary and follow-up plan?
- How often do I need to see my cancer care team?
- When and how should I contact them?
- Will I need tests to see if my lymphoma has come back, or to check for problems from my treatment?
- Do I need any screening tests, like a mammogram or colonoscopy, to find other cancers early?
- Are there any possible late or long-term side effects?
- Where can I find my medical records after treatment?

Staying healthy

Be sure to tell your doctor or cancer care team if any treatment side effects don't go away or if you have any new symptoms.

There are things you can do to keep yourself healthy during and after treatment. Not smoking may help reduce your chances of lymphoma. Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, eating well, and being active can also help you stay healthy and lower your risk of getting a new lymphoma or other cancers.

Dealing with your feelings

Having lymphoma might make you feel scared, sad, or nervous. It's normal to have these feelings, and there are ways to help you cope with them.

- Don't try to deal with your feelings by yourself. Talk about them, no matter what they are.
- It's OK to feel sad or down once in a while, but let your cancer care team know if you have these feelings for more than a few days.
- If your doctor says it's OK, continue doing things you enjoy like spending time outdoors, going to a movie or sporting event, or going out to dinner.
- Get help with tasks like cooking and cleaning.

You might want to reach out to friends, family, or religious leaders or groups. Counseling or a support group can also help. Tell your cancer care team how you're feeling. They can help you find the right support.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/lymphoma or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.