

Lymphoma

If lymphoma is found and treated early, you have a good chance of getting better.

What is lymphoma?

- A lymphoma is a cancer that starts in the lymphatic system.
- The lymphatic system is a bit like your bloodstream – it goes all around the body but instead of carrying blood, the lymphatic system carries lymph.
- Although many cancers can spread to the lymphatic system – lymphomas are different because they start there.
- There are two main types – **non-hodgkin** lymphoma and **Hodgkin** lymphoma. The name Hodgkin comes from the doctor who first described these cancers.
- Non-hodgkin lymphoma is the most common lymphoma.
- It's important to know exactly what type of lymphoma you have because treatment can be different.

How will I know I have lymphoma?

You can have lymphoma without noticing anything is wrong. Warning signs may include:

- a lump in your neck, under your arm or in your groin that doesn't hurt – called enlarged lymph nodes
- getting sick more often
- sweating a lot, especially at night
- losing weight without trying.

First your doctor will feel the lymph nodes in your neck, underarms or groin for signs of swelling. The most common test is a biopsy, which can be done in different ways. To find which area of the body is affected by lymphoma you may have blood tests, a chest x-ray, CT scan, MRI scan, PET scan and ultrasound.

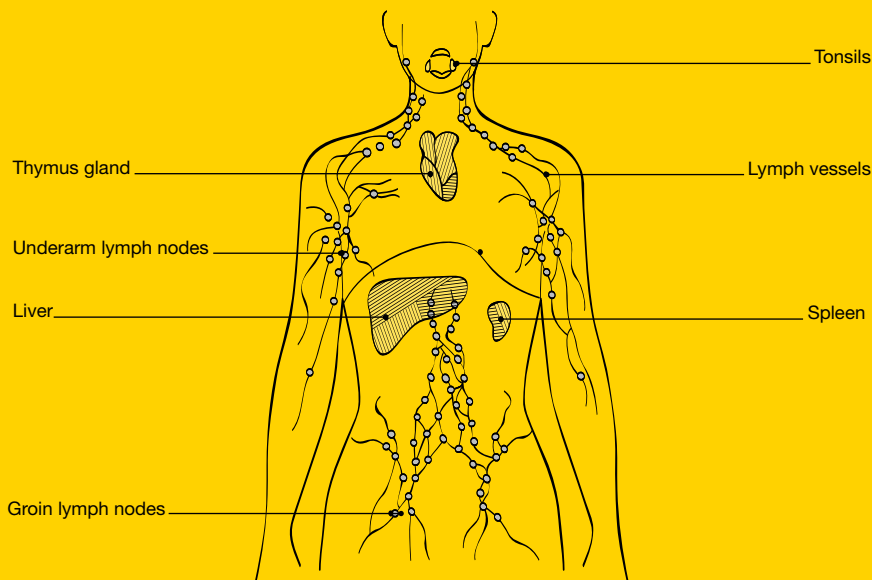
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What do the test results mean?

The test results will tell the doctor what type of lymphoma you have, and if the cancer has spread (the stage). This information helps the doctors decide what treatment you need.

What the lymphatic system looks like

The lymphatic system helps protect the body from disease. It has a lot of different parts that work together to fight off infections and keep you healthy.



Lymph

A clear fluid that carries only white blood cells.

Lymph vessels

Thin tubes found all over the body. They collect extra lymph and return it to the body.

Lymph nodes

Small, bean-shaped structures that remove bacteria. The picture above shows the main groups of lymph nodes (also called lymph glands) but they are found in many other places in the head and body.

Tonsils

Traps germs you breathe in or eat.

Thymus

Helps produce white blood cells.

Spleen

Removes waste products from the blood and destroys old blood cells.

Bone marrow

The soft, spongy area in the middle of bones. Makes red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets.

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What treatment will I need?

There are different types of treatment for lymphoma. You may have one or more treatments depending on the type of lymphoma and stage of disease. Sometimes treatment needs to start straight away and other times you can wait awhile.

- **Chemotherapy** – uses drugs to kill or damage the cancer cells
- **Radiotherapy** – uses x-rays to kill or damage the cancer cells
- **Monoclonal antibodies** – boost your immune system so it can fight cancer
- **Steroids** – drugs used to make chemotherapy work better
- **Stem cell transplant** – replaces stem cells destroyed by high-dose chemotherapy

How will the treatment affect my body?

Treatment for lymphoma can cause problems. Some of the common ones include:

- **Anaemia** – This is when you don't have many red blood cells. It makes you feel tired.
- **Bleeding problems** – This may happen if you don't have enough platelets, which help stop bleeding.

How do I manage my cancer?

It is normal for you and your family to have lots of different feelings right now. Talking with your doctor, nurse or health care professional will help answer any questions you may have.

Depending on where you live, you might need to travel for treatment. You can get help to pay for travel and accommodation.

For more information

- Call Cancer Council 13 11 20
- Visit www.cancerCouncil.com.au
- Visit www.menzies.edu.au/cancer
- For current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer-related statistics, see www.aihw.gov.au

This information has been adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Menzies School of Health Research in consultation with a Clinical Advisory Group and an Indigenous Consultation group. Production by Cancer Council.