

# Lymphoma

*“Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”*

**Proverbs 24:14**

Lymphoma is a cancer that begins in the lymph system, which is our immune system. This system is designed to fight infection, and runs throughout the body. The white cells, which are our infection fighters, move through the fluid in the lymphatic system.

The problem arises when the white cells change and begin multiplying at an uncontrolled rate. They grow into tumors, and cut off needed nutrition and oxygen in the area of the tumor. Because these cells are part of transportation system meant to seek and destroy invaders throughout the body, these bad cells can spread within this system and cause tumors in more than one place.

Lymphoma is the most common type of blood cancer in this country. Over 60,000 people are diagnosed each year. There are two main categories, Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin. However, there are many subcategories in each, and they each respond differently to therapy.

Our cells normally grow, divide, and then die. Cancer cells grow quickly and do not die, resulting in tumors. The reason this may happen could be genetics—in other words, the tendency of cells go haywire can run in families. Other things can put you at greater risk such as exposure to certain pesticides, herbicides, or benzene—which is a solvent. Black hair dye has been associated with certain types of lymphoma. Older people are at greater risk, but children can get lymphoma. Risk is higher in those with autoimmune diseases such as Lupus, and anyone who is HIV positive. However, even if two similar people are exposed to the same elements, one may develop Lymphoma while the other does not. We can't prevent it, and we don't catch it from another person. It simply grows in some people and not in others.

Symptoms can vary from person to person, but it is not uncommon to first notice swelling in the groin, underarms, or neck. There may be fever, tiredness, or weight loss. Night sweats or coughing can be present.

Diagnosis begins with a full history, and may include blood test, CT scan, MRI, or bone marrow biopsy. However, for a 100% diagnosis, a biopsy of the tumor is taken and examined by a pathologist. Once the diagnosis is made, a person must be checked to see if the cancer has spread anywhere else. With this information, the doctor can plan the best treatment.

Treatment depends on many factors, so no two patients are likely to be treated exactly the same. Age and general health are taken into account, as well as any previous cancer treatments. Chemotherapy is used to kill off all rapidly multiplying cells, whether they are cancerous or not. This is why side effects such as hair loss and nausea are common, because our hair roots and stomach lining cells multiply quickly. Radiation targets the cancer cells directly with x-rays that are directed right at the tumor. The side effects can include a mild skin burn, nausea, and loss of energy until a few weeks after completing the treatments. Depending on the type of lymphoma, a bone marrow or stem cell transplant may be needed.

Treatment has come a long way, and the majority of patients with lymphoma can live long lives after undergoing treatment. There is a great deal of information, and hope, out there for anyone with some form of this disease, and for their families.

Some good sources are: [www.lymphoma.org](http://www.lymphoma.org) and [www.mayoclinic.com/health/non-hodgkins-lymphoma](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/non-hodgkins-lymphoma)

**Blessings, Nurse Karen**