

## What is it?

Lymphoma is a type of blood cancer which affects the lymphatic system. It is the most common form of blood cancer in Australia. It can develop in the lymph nodes, spleen, bone marrow, blood or other organs.

The two main forms are:

- **Non-Hodgkin's** – affects around 90% of people with this blood cancer
- **Hodgkin's** – affects around 10% of people with this blood cancer

The main difference between these forms is the exact type of lymph cells involved in each.

Lymphoma affects each person differently. Some people do not need treatment for many years. Others may need treatment sooner. Most people with lymphoma will recover.

## What will my GP do now?

If your GP thinks you have lymphoma, they may send you to get a biopsy. A biopsy is when a doctor removes cells or tissues from a lump of concern. They will look at the cells or tissue under a microscope to check for this type of blood cancer. You may need a blood test before you have a biopsy.

Your GP may refer you to a blood cancer doctor (haematologist) to help work out what stage your cancer is at. They will give you a treatment plan. Treatment depends on the stage of your disease and your health status. It may take a few more tests before your healthcare team work out the best treatment plan for you.

Treatment options include:

- Medications
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Stem-cell transplant

Your blood cancer care team will explain the treatments, their benefits and possible side effects. Your GP may refer you to the hospital if you have any symptoms or test results of great concern.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may manage your lymphoma with your blood cancer doctor. If so, you will need to visit your GP every three months for the first 12 months. After that, you will see your GP every six months. During these visits, your GP may ask about your symptoms.

Your GP will also check to see if there is any growth in size of your lymph nodes or other organs. They may ask you to start keeping a diary of your symptoms.

Your GP may arrange blood, urine and image tests from time to time to check if there are any changes. They may also check your skin.

People with lymphoma may have suppressed immune systems. This makes it harder for your body to fight off infection. Your GP may talk to you about vaccines to help protect you from germs and disease.

If you need to have chemotherapy, your GP may help manage some of the side effects of this treatment.

## What can I do?

Keep a diary of symptoms, as advised by your GP or blood cancer team. Adopt a healthy diet and keep active, with regular exercise. Make time to relax, using techniques such as mindful breathing, stretching or yoga. Stop smoking and decrease the amount of alcohol you drink. Make use of support services such as psychology and counselling.



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Who will be the main contact in my health team?
- How do I contact my health team?
- Can I have the flu shot and other vaccines?
- Is it safe to take vitamins?
- Do I need to change my diet?
- What type of exercise can I do?



## What supports are available?

### Public haematology clinics

There are public haematology clinics across the South Western Sydney Local Health District. They help people living with blood cancers. Your GP can refer you to one of these services. They are located in Bankstown, Bowral, Campbelltown and Liverpool.

### Private specialist

You can also ask your GP to refer you to a private specialist.

### Leukaemia Foundation

The Leukaemia Foundation offers practical support services for people living with a blood cancer diagnosis. Visit [leukaemia.org.au](http://leukaemia.org.au) or phone 1800 620 420

### Lymphoma Australia

Lymphoma Australia offers free support services for people living with a lymphoma diagnosis. Visit [lymphoma.org.au](http://lymphoma.org.au) or phone 1800 953 081

## Where can I learn more?

- **Cancer Council Australia** – Lymphoma: [cancer.org.au](http://cancer.org.au)
- **Lymphoma Australia** – What is lymphoma? [lymphoma.org.au](http://lymphoma.org.au)
- **Leukaemia Foundation** – Lymphoma: [leukaemia.org.au](http://leukaemia.org.au)