

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

What is it?

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) is a type of blood cancer. It affects the white blood cells in the bone marrow. It is a type of cancer which grows and progresses slowly. If you have CLL you might not notice any symptoms. This type of cancer is usually found during a routine blood test.

As the cancer progresses, the bone marrow fills with unhealthy white blood cells. This can cause tiredness, dizziness, bleeding and bruising problems, pain and unintentional weight loss. Many people who have CLL will also have swollen lymph nodes, night sweats and high temperatures.

Your treatment will depend on the stage of your CLL. Some people never have treatment, or start treatment later.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will arrange a blood test if they think you might have this type of cancer. They may refer you to a blood cancer specialist for more tests.

Once you are diagnosed, your treatment will depend on the stage of the cancer. You will be looked after by a team of cancer specialists, called your cancer care team.

Treatment options include:

- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Steroid therapy
- Immunoglobulin infusions
- Stem cell and bone marrow transplant (to replace unhealthy cells with new, healthy cells)
- New treatments through clinical trials

Your cancer care team will explain the treatments, their benefits and possible side effects.

What will my GP do in the future?

If you don't need treatment right away, you should see your GP for regular check-ups. If you need treatment, your cancer care team will see you for check-ups and treatment when needed.

Your GP will continue to support your health and wellbeing needs. They will monitor your condition and make sure you keep as healthy as you can. People who have CLL are more at risk of getting other types of cancer. Your GP may want to test for other types of cancer.

If you need support for your mental health, your GP can refer you to a counsellor or psychiatrist.

What can I do?

It is important to keep a diary of your symptoms. This is so you can let your GP know if there are any changes.

Signs of infection include:

- Fever, chills or sweats
- A new or changed cough
- Sore throat or new mouth sore
- Vomiting, runny poo or tummy pain
- Shortness of breath
- Blocked or stuffy nose
- Stiff neck
- Redness, pain or swelling on your body
- Burning pain when you wee, or needing to wee more often
- Painful rash on one side of the face or body

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What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What symptoms should I look out for?
- What treatment might I need?
- Are there any clinical trials I could join?
- Can I do my normal activities?
- How often will I need check-ups?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?



What supports are available?

Local

View this factsheet on the Health Resource Directory website (www.healthresourcedirectory.org.au) to find the right local supports and services for you.

State and national

Leukaemia Foundation

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with blood cancer, the Leukaemia Foundation is Australia's only dedicated blood cancer support service. Their experienced team will help navigate the emotional, physical, and psychosocial challenges of a blood cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. There are a number of support services available. Visit leukaemia.org.au.

Where can I learn more?

- **Cancer Council Australia** - Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL): cancercouncil.com.au
- **Leukaemia Foundation** - Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL): leukaemia.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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