

# ASCO ANSWERS

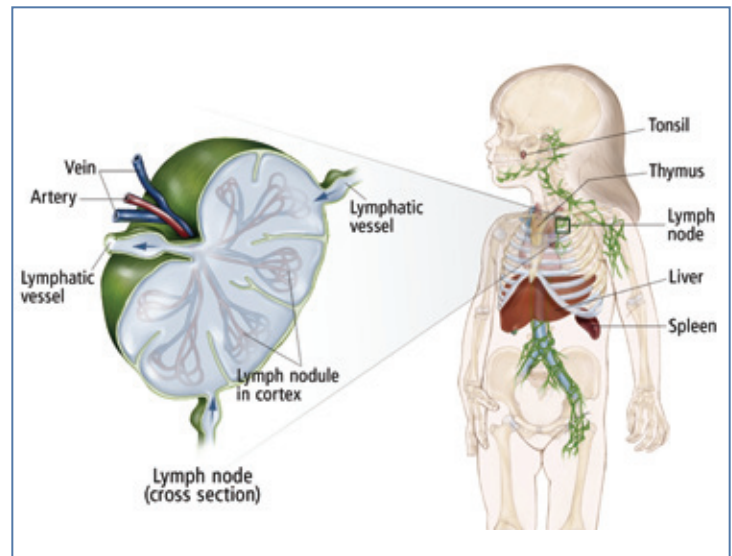
## NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA

### WHAT IS NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA?

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL) is a disease of the lymph system in which lymph cells grow uncontrollably and form tumors. Three types of NHL are found in children: Burkitt lymphoma (most common), large cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and lymphoblastic lymphoma. The types are identified by how the cells look under a microscope.

### WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE LYMPH SYSTEM?

The lymph system consists of thin tubes that branch out to all parts of the body. It carries lymph, a clear fluid containing lymphocytes (white blood cells) that fight infection and disease. Lymph tissue is present in many parts of the body, so NHL can start almost anywhere and spread to any part of the body. NHL most often begins in the lymph nodes, liver, or spleen.



Find additional cancer information at [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net).

### WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing a cancer, such as where it is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. There are four stages for NHL: stages I through IV (one through four). More information is available at [www.cancer.net/childnhl](http://www.cancer.net/childnhl).

### HOW IS NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA TREATED?

Four types of treatment are used for NHL in children: chemotherapy, immunotherapy (treatment that uses the body's immune system to fight cancer; also called biologic therapy), radiation therapy, and stem cell transplantation. Chemotherapy is the primary treatment and can be given by mouth, injected into a vein, or injected into the spine. The type of chemotherapy used depends on the cancer's stage and the type of NHL.

When making treatment decisions, consider a clinical trial; most children with cancer are treated as part of one. Talk with your child's doctor about all treatment options. The side effects of non-Hodgkin lymphoma treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your child's health care team.

### HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD OR TEEN COPE WITH NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA?

Helping your child or teenager understand a cancer diagnosis is a key part of the coping process. Children and adolescents with cancer should be treated at a pediatric cancer center. These centers not only provide access to the latest treatments, they offer age-appropriate programs for social and emotional needs. Encouraging your child and other family members to share their emotions can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your child's health care. Consider asking the following questions of your child's doctors:

- What type of NHL has been diagnosed?
- What stage is the disease? What does this mean?
- Can you explain my child's pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Would you explain my child's treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to my child?
- What treatment plan do you recommend for my child? Why?
- Who will be part of the treatment team, and what does each member do?
- How will this treatment affect my child's daily life? Will he or she be able to go to school and perform his or her usual activities?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my child's cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- What short-term and long-term side effects may be associated with my child's cancer treatment?



Learn more  
about childhood  
non-Hodgkin  
lymphoma

- What follow-up tests will my child need, and how often will he or she need them?
- Where can I find emotional support for my child? For my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at [www.cancer.net/childnhl](http://www.cancer.net/childnhl).

**Cancer.Net™**

Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO®

**For more information, visit ASCO's patient website, [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net), or call 888-651-3038.**

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## TERMS TO KNOW

### **B cell:**

A white blood cell that makes antibodies to fight disease

### **Bone marrow biopsy:**

Removal and analysis of a tissue sample from the center of the bones

### **Chemotherapy:**

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

### **Clinical trial:**

A research study that tests a new treatment or drug

### **Hematologist:**

A doctor who specializes in treating blood disorders

### **Lymph node:**

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

### **Pediatric oncologist:**

A doctor who specializes in treating children and teens with cancer

### **Prognosis:**

Chance of recovery

### **Radiation therapy:**

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

### **Stem cell transplant:**

Procedure that replaces diseased bone marrow with healthy stem cells that create new bone marrow or provides stem cells to help the bone marrow recover after high-dose chemotherapy

### **T cell:**

A white blood cell that directly fights disease

### **Tumor:**

An abnormal growth of body tissue