

[Home](#) > [Types of Cancer](#) > [Leukemia - B-cell Prolymphocytic Leukemia and Hairy Cell Leukemia](#) > [Leukemia - B-cell Prolymphocytic Leukemia and Hairy Cell Leukemia - Risk Factors](#)

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[Leukemia - B-cell Prolymphocytic Leukemia and Hairy Cell Leukemia - Risk Factors \[1\]](#)

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 03/2016

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing PLL or HCL. To see other pages, use the menu.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

In general, leukemia can sometimes be caused by a genetic mutation or change. These may be changes that are passed from generation to generation within a family. Or, environmental factors may cause these changes, such as smoking or chemical or radiation exposure. However, most often the cause of leukemia is not known.

The following factors may raise a person's risk of developing PLL or HCL. Learn more about the [risk factors for CLL](#) [3].

- **Age.** HCL occurs most often in people between ages 40 and 70.
- **Gender.** Men are 5 times more likely to develop HCL than women.

- **Race/Ethnicity.** HCL is more common in white people in general and Ashkenazi Jewish men specifically. PLL and HCL are rare in people of Japanese or Southeast Asian descent.

The [next section in this guide is Symptoms and Signs](#) [4]. It explains what body changes or medical problems this disease can cause. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

- [1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/leukemia-b-cell-prolymphocytic-leukemia-and-hairy-cell-leukemia/risk-factors>
[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>
[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19095>
[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19082>