

[Home](#) > [Types of Cancer](#) > [Leukemia - Chronic T-Cell Lymphocytic](#) > [Leukemia - Chronic T-Cell Lymphocytic - Overview](#)

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[Leukemia - Chronic T-Cell Lymphocytic - Overview \[1\]](#)

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 09/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about this disease and the parts of the body it may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net's Guide to Chronic T-Cell Leukemia. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

Leukemia is a cancer of the blood cells. Leukemia begins when healthy blood cells change and grow uncontrollably.

About blood cells

Blood cells are made in the bone marrow, the spongy tissue inside the larger bones in the body. Changes in the bone marrow cells can cause too many or too few of certain blood cells. There are different types of blood cells:

- Red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body
- White blood cells that fight infection
- Platelets that help the blood to clot

About leukemia

Types of leukemia are named after the specific blood cell that becomes cancerous, such as the lymphoid cells, which are a type of white blood cell, or the myeloid cells, which are bone marrow cells that turn into cells that fight bacterial infections.

There are four main types of leukemia in adults:

- [Acute lymphocytic leukemia \(ALL\)](#) [3]
- [Chronic lymphocytic leukemia \(CLL\)](#) [4]
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#) [5]
- [Chronic myeloid leukemia \(CML\)](#) [6]

There are also less common types of leukemia, but they are generally subcategories of one of the four main categories listed above. This section focuses on different types of chronic T-cell lymphocytic leukemia, a subtype of chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL).

A T cell is a type of white blood cell that directly helps body's immune system fight infection.

Subtypes of T-cell leukemia

The subtypes of T-cell leukemia include:

- **Large granular lymphocytic leukemia (LGLL).** LGLL is a slow-growing T-cell leukemia and is more common in women than in men. The cause of LGLL is unknown. However, about 30% of people with LGLL also have rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic disease causing swelling in the joints of the hands, feet, wrists, knees, hips, or shoulders. Also, nearly half of patients with LGLL have a genetic change in either a gene called *STAT3* or another called *STAT5B*.
- **T-cell prolymphocytic leukemia (T-PLL).** T-PLL is an aggressive subtype of CLL. It is the most common mature T-cell leukemia in adults. T-PLL is more common in older men, but women may also develop T-PLL. It can affect the skin, but in a different way than Sezary syndrome (see below). Patients with T-PLL often have a change to the their T-cells called a T-cell receptor rearrangement, which is linked to abnormal T-cell growth.

- **Adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma (ATLL).** ATLL has four subtypes. Depending on the different features, it is subclassified as smoldering, chronic, acute, or adult T-cell lymphoma, which is a cancer of the lymph system. The acute and the adult T-cell lymphoma subtypes grow quickly. ATLL is caused by a retrovirus called the human T-cell leukemia virus (HTLV1).
- **Sezary syndrome.** Sezary syndrome is a form of mycosis fungoides, a T-cell lymphoma that occurs in the skin. Sezary syndrome is usually slow-growing and takes years to develop from mycosis fungoides, which is located only on the skin. Sezary syndrome is generally diagnosed when large numbers of the lymphoma cells are found in the blood, often together with reddening of the skin, which is called erythroderma.

Looking for More of an Overview?

If you would like additional introductory information, explore these related items. Please note these links will take you to other sections on Cancer.Net:

- [ASCO Answers Fact Sheet](#) [7]: Read a one-page fact sheet (available as a PDF) that offers an easy-to-print introduction to CLL.
- [Cancer.Net Patient Education Video](#) [8]: View a short video led by an ASCO expert in leukemia that provides basic information and areas of research.

The [next section in this guide is Statistics](#) [9] and it helps explain how many people are diagnosed with this disease and general survival rates. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/es/node/19120>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/es/node/51>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31282>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31278>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31280>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31277>

[7] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_cll.pdf

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27376>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19121>