

Lymphoma - Hodgkin - Childhood - Overview [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

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 Childhood Hodgkin Lymphoma. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

Hodgkin lymphoma, previously called Hodgkin's disease, is one type of lymphoma. Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system. Lymphoma begins when cells in the lymphatic system change and grow uncontrollably, which may form a tumor.

About the lymphatic system

The lymphatic system is made up of thin tubes that branch out to all parts of the body. Its job is to fight infection and other diseases. The lymphatic system carries lymph, a colorless fluid containing lymphocytes, which are white blood cells. Lymphocytes fight germs in the body. B-lymphocytes, which are also called B cells, make antibodies to fight bacteria. T-lymphocytes, or T cells, kill viruses and foreign cells and trigger the B cells to make antibodies.

Groups of bean-shaped organs called lymph nodes are located throughout the body at different areas in the lymphatic system. Lymph nodes are found in clusters in the neck, chest, underarms, abdomen, pelvis and groin. Other parts of the lymphatic system include the spleen, which makes lymphocytes and filters blood; the thymus, an organ under the breastbone; and the tonsils, which are located in the throat. See a [medical illustration](#) [3] here.

Hodgkin lymphoma most commonly affects lymph nodes in the neck or the area between the lungs and behind the breastbone, which is called the mediastinum. It can also begin in groups of lymph nodes under the arms, in the groin, or in the abdomen or pelvis.

If Hodgkin lymphoma spreads, it typically spreads along the lymphatic channels to other lymph nodes and the spleen, or outside of the lymphatic system, most commonly to the lungs, liver, bone marrow, or bone.

Types of Hodgkin lymphoma

It is important to know the type of Hodgkin lymphoma, as this may affect the patient's treatment plan. Doctors determine the type of Hodgkin lymphoma based on how the cells in a tissue sample look under a microscope and whether the cells contain abnormal patterns of certain proteins. There are two main types of Hodgkin lymphoma: nodular lymphocyte predominant and classical.

Nodular lymphocyte predominant Hodgkin lymphoma. This is more common among male and younger patients. The disease is usually found in the neck, underarm, or groin.

Classical Hodgkin lymphoma. There are four subtypes of classical Hodgkin lymphoma: nodular sclerosis, mixed cellularity, lymphocyte rich, and lymphocyte depleted.

1. **Nodular sclerosis Hodgkin lymphoma.** This is the most common type of Hodgkin lymphoma in adolescents and young adults in the United States and in other developed countries. Tumors are often very bulky. They most often begin in the lymph nodes in the neck, chest, or abdomen and may spread to the lungs.
2. **Mixed cellularity Hodgkin lymphoma.** This type is more common in children age 10 years or younger. It shows the strongest link to the Epstein-Barr virus, the virus that causes mononucleosis. It usually begins in the lymph nodes in the abdomen or in the spleen.
3. **Lymphocyte rich Hodgkin lymphoma.** This type is rare and may be hard to distinguish from nodular lymphocyte predominant Hodgkin lymphoma. It usually begins in the lymph nodes of the neck, underarm, and groin, and sometimes involves the spleen and nodes in the chest.
4. **Lymphocyte depleted Hodgkin lymphoma.** This is a very rare, aggressive type that is uncommon in children. This type is usually more widespread, involving lymph nodes as well as the bones and bone marrow.

Age and Hodgkin lymphoma

There are three different forms of Hodgkin lymphoma:

- A childhood form: develops in children 14 years or younger
- A young adult form: develops in people 15 to 34 years old
- An older adult form: develops in people 55 to 74 years old

The childhood form of Hodgkin lymphoma is less common in the United States and is especially rare in children younger than five years. Hodgkin lymphoma is most commonly diagnosed in the young adult form and older adult form. In children younger than five years, Hodgkin lymphoma is more common in boys than in girls. Among adolescents, the rates of Hodgkin lymphoma are roughly equal among boys and girls.

This section covers Hodgkin lymphoma in children and adolescents. Learn more about [adult Hodgkin lymphoma](#) [4] or [non-Hodgkin lymphoma in children](#) [5].

Looking for More of an Overview?

If you would like additional introductory information, explore this related item. Please note that this link takes you to another section on Cancer.Net:

- [ASCO Answers Fact Sheet](#) [6]: Read a one-page fact sheet, available in PDF, that offers an easy-to-print introduction to this type of cancer.

The [next section in this guide is Statistics](#) [7] 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/cancer-types/lymphoma-hodgkin-childhood/overview>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19165>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31271>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31270>

[6] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_hodgkin_childhood.pdf

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19164>