

Childhood Hodgkin Lymphoma

What is Hodgkin lymphoma?

Hodgkin lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system in which lymphatic cells change and grow abnormally and may form a tumor. There are two main subtypes of Hodgkin lymphoma: classical and nodular lymphocyte predominant. There are four subtypes of classical: nodular sclerosing, mixed cellularity, lymphocyte rich, and lymphocyte depleted. Hodgkin lymphoma has a childhood form that most commonly occurs in children ages 14 or younger, a young adult form that occurs in adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 34, and an older adult form. This fact sheet covers children and adolescents.

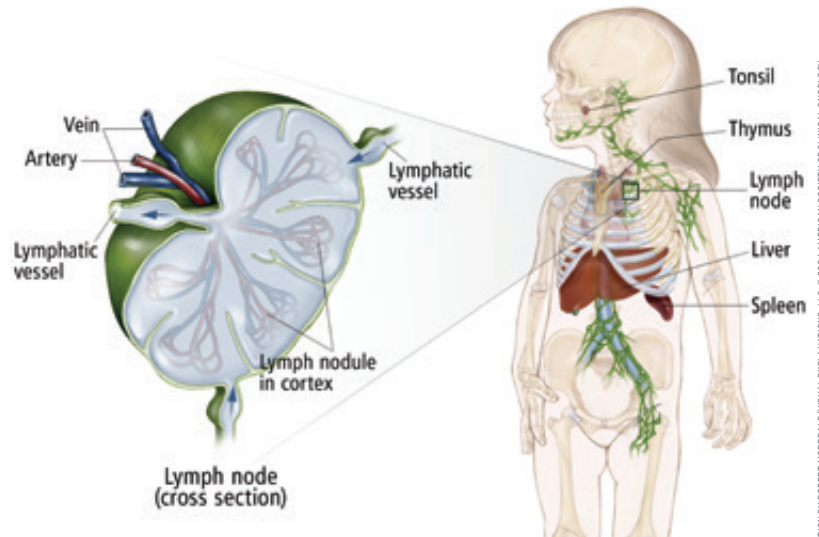


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What is the function of the lymphatic system?

The lymphatic system consists of thin tubes that branch out to all parts of the body to carry lymph, a clear fluid containing lymphocytes, which are white blood cells. The lymphatic system is an important part of the immune system that fights infection and disease. Hodgkin lymphoma commonly affects the lymph nodes in the neck or the area between the lungs and behind the breastbone. The cancer can spread outside the lymphatic system, most often to the lungs, bones, bone marrow, and liver.

What does stage mean?

The stage is a way of describing where the cancer is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. There are four stages for Hodgkin lymphoma: stages I through IV (one through four). More information is available at www.cancer.net/childhodgkin.

How is Hodgkin lymphoma treated?

The amount and type of treatment depends on the number of involved lymph nodes (areas of cancer) and how large the lymph nodes have grown. Combinations of chemotherapy drugs are used to treat Hodgkin lymphoma. Children and adolescents may also receive radiation therapy in addition to chemotherapy. If the disease returns following treatment, a stem cell transplant may be recommended.

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 Hodgkin lymphoma treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your child's health care team. This is called palliative care and is an important part of your child's overall treatment plan.

How can I help my child or teen cope with 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 cancer center with access to pediatric specialists. Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your child's health care team are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, organizing your child's health information, making sure all of your questions are answered, and participating in the decision-making process are other steps. Talk with your child's health care team about any concerns. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you 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 and subtype of Hodgkin lymphoma has been diagnosed?
- What stage and risk group 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? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend for my child? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the lymphoma, help my child feel better, or both?
- 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?
- What short-term and long-term side effects may be associated with my child's cancer treatment?
- Could this treatment affect my child's ability to have children in the future?
- What follow-up tests will my child need, and how often will he or she need them?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my child's cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- Where can I find emotional support for my child? For my family?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/childhodgkin.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Biopsy:

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

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

Reed-Sternberg cell:

A distinctive type of abnormal cell specific to Hodgkin lymphoma

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 chemotherapy

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue

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