

Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma is a cancer within the cells of immune system and most frequently occurs in adults. There are many types of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and they are generally classified as fast- or slow-growing cancers. Researchers have yet to determine a direct cause for non-Hodgkin lymphoma, though some people with severely suppressed immune systems can be at a higher risk. The survival rate truly depends on the stage of the lymphoma.

Statistics

- The rate of non-Hodgkin lymphoma has nearly doubled in the past 30 years in the United States.
- In 2008, it is estimated that 66,120 Americans will be diagnosed with new cases of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.
- This year alone in the United States, 19,160 people will die from non-Hodgkin lymphoma.
- In Texas, non-Hodgkin lymphoma is the sixth most common cancer with more than 4,033 diagnoses expected in 2008.
- More than 95 percent of non-Hodgkin lymphoma cases occur in adults.

Risk Factors

- **Weak Immune System:** People with a weakened immune system either have an inherited immune disorder like hypogammaglobulinemia; or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome; or autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, or Sjogren syndrome.
- **Exposure to Certain Infections:** People who have had certain types of immune depressing infections such as HIV, AIDS, or Epstein-Barr virus are at a higher risk of developing the disease.
- **Organ Transplant Patients:** People who have had organ transplants are at an increased risk of developing non-Hodgkin lymphoma, as the drugs used to prevent the body from rejecting the new organ tend to suppress the immune system.
- **Age:** Adults are more likely to develop non-Hodgkin lymphoma than children. The highest rates of non-Hodgkin lymphoma occur in people over age 60.

Symptoms

The following may be symptoms of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, but could be linked to other health conditions. If the following symptoms are present, individuals are encouraged to consult their physician:

- Swollen lymph nodes
- Itching
- Night sweats
- Fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Intermittent fever
- Pain, swelling, or a feeling of fullness in the abdomen

Prevention

Most people with non-Hodgkin lymphoma have no known risk factors. The best way to reduce the risk for non-Hodgkin lymphoma is to try to prevent known risk factors, such as a weak immune system.

Treatment Options

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, depending on the stage, may be treated by different members of the cancer care team – the primary surgeon, medical oncologists, and radiation oncologists. Consultation with each of these specialists is encouraged where appropriate. Treatment options vary depending on the type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, how advanced the cancer is, and if it has spread to other parts of the body. Many advancements have been made in the treatment of non-Hodgkin lymphoma; however, no two patients are the same, so treatment may be tailored to fit patients' specific situations. In most cases, a physician might begin with chemotherapy and radiation or combine chemotherapy drugs for greater effect. In some instances, patients may undergo a stem cell transplant after chemotherapy.

Sources: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institutes of Health