

Lymphoma

Introduction

Lymphomas are cancers that develop in the lymphatic system -- the tissues and organs that produce, store, and carry white blood cells. The lymphatic system includes:

- Bone marrow
- Spleen
- Thymus
- Lymph nodes
- A network of thin tubes that carry lymph and white blood cells to all the tissues of the body

Types of lymphoma include:

- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma -- The most common form of the disease. Cells in the lymphatic system become abnormal. They divide and grow without any order or control. Or old cells that should die don't. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma can begin or spread to almost any part of the body.
- Hodgkin's lymphoma -- The cells in the lymphatic system become abnormal. But the cancer tends to spread in an orderly way from one group of lymph nodes to the next. Eventually, it can spread almost anywhere.
- Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma -- T-lymphocytes, which are infection-fighting white blood cells, become cancerous, causing skin problems.

Signs and Symptoms

Lymphoma is accompanied by the following signs and symptoms:

Non-Hodgkin's and Hodgkin's lymphomas

- Painless swelling in lymph nodes in neck, underarm, or groin
- Unexplained fever
- Drenching night sweats
- Fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Itchy skin
- Persistent, nonproductive cough

Cutaneous T-Cell lymphoma

- Itchiness
- Dark patches on skin
- Tumors on skin (mycosis fungoides)
- Skin infections

Who Is Most At Risk?

People with the following conditions or characteristics are at risk of developing lymphoma:

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

- Congenital immunodeficiency
- Infections: Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), *Helicobacter pylori*, Kaposi's sarcoma herpes virus (HIV-related lymphoma), human T-cell leukemia virus type 1
- Immunosuppressive therapy following organ transplant
- Autoimmune diseases
- Prior chemotherapy or radiation exposure or therapy
- Exposure to certain chemicals or solvents