

Mantle cell lymphoma (MCL) belongs to a group of diseases known as non-Hodgkin's lymphomas, which are related malignancies (cancers) that affect the lymphatic system (lymphomas). Functioning as part of the immune system, the lymphatic system helps to protect the body against infection and disease. It consists of a network of tubular channels (lymph vessels) that drain a thin watery fluid known as lymph from different areas of the body into the bloodstream. Lymph accumulates in the tiny spaces between tissue cells and contains proteins, fats, and certain white blood cells known as lymphocytes. Mantle cell lymphoma (MCL) is an uncommon form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL), comprising about 2 to 7 percent of adult NHLs in the United States and Europe. The disease primarily affects older adults, with males representing approximately three-quarters of those with MCL. Many affected individuals are diagnosed in their late 50s or early to mid 60s. Reports suggest that most individuals with MCL have advanced (i.e., stage III or stage IV) disease at diagnosis. (For further information on stages, please see the "Standard Therapies: Diagnosis" ["Stages"] section of this report below.)