

Hodgkin Lymphoma: Risk Factors



What is a risk factor?

A risk factor is anything that may increase your chance of having a disease. Risk factors for a certain type of cancer might include smoking, diet, family history, or many other things. The exact cause of someone's cancer may not be known. But risk factors can make it more likely for a person to have cancer.

Things you should know about risk factors for cancer:

- Risk factors can increase your risk, but they don't always cause the disease.
- Some people with one or more risk factors never get cancer. Other people get cancer but have no known risk factors.
- Some risk factors are very well known. But experts are studying risk factors for many types of cancer.
- Some risk factors, such as family history, may not be in your control. But others might be things you can change. Knowing about risk factors can help you make choices that might help lower your risk.

Who is at risk for Hodgkin lymphoma?

Risk factors for Hodgkin lymphoma include:

- **Age.** Hodgkin lymphoma occurs most often in people in their 20 and 30s or after age 55.
- **Gender.** More men than women get Hodgkin lymphoma.
- **Family history.** If you have a brother or sister with Hodgkin lymphoma, you are at higher risk. Having an identical twin with Hodgkin lymphoma also raises your risk. But most people with this type of cancer don't have a family history of it.
- **Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) infection.** EBV is the virus that causes mononucleosis, also called mono. People who have been infected with EBV may have a slightly higher risk of Hodgkin lymphoma. But many people are infected with EBV, and few of them get Hodgkin lymphoma.
- **HIV infection.** HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People who are infected with HIV are at greater risk for Hodgkin lymphoma.
- **Weakened immune system.** People with autoimmune diseases and those who take medicines to suppress the immune system after an organ transplant have an increased risk of Hodgkin lymphoma.

What are your risk factors?

Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk factors for Hodgkin lymphoma. Ask if there are things you can do to help lower your risk. Most of the known risk factors for Hodgkin lymphoma can't be changed. And it's also not possible to prevent infection with EBV. But there are things you can do to lower your risk for HIV infection.

There are no regular screening tests to look for Hodgkin lymphoma in people who don't have symptoms. But you should know about possible symptoms of Hodgkin lymphoma. This is even more important if you have known risk factors for it, such as a strong family history. If you have symptoms, like enlarged lymph nodes that don't go away after a few weeks, see a healthcare provider.

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