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Lymphoma

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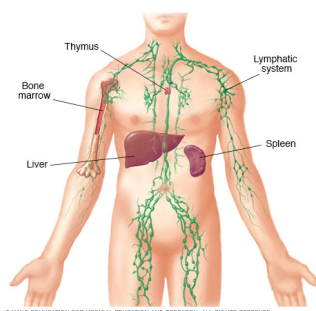
Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system, which is part of the body's germ-fighting network.

The lymphatic system includes the lymph nodes (lymph glands), spleen, thymus gland and bone marrow. Lymphoma can affect all those areas as well as other organs throughout the body.

Many types of lymphoma exist. The main subtypes are:

- Hodgkin's lymphoma (formerly called Hodgkin's disease)
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

What lymphoma treatment is best for you depends on your lymphoma type and its severity. Lymphoma treatment may involve chemotherapy, immunotherapy medications, radiation therapy, a bone marrow transplant or some combination of these.

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Parts of the immune system

Your body's lymphatic system is part of your immune system, which protects you against infection and disease. The lymphatic system includes your spleen, thymus, lymph nodes and lymph channels, as well as your tonsils and adenoids.

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Types

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia

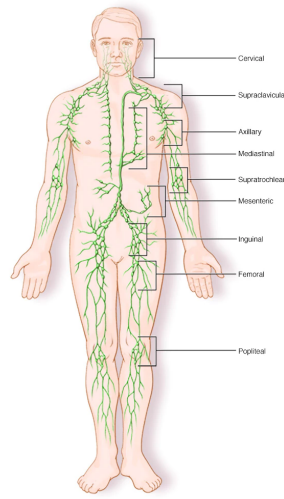
Cutaneous B-cell lymphoma

Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma

Hodgkin's lymphoma (Hodgkin's disease)

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Waldenstrom macroglobulinemia



Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of lymphoma may include:

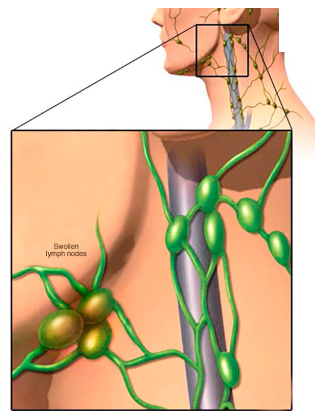
- Painless swelling of lymph nodes in your neck, armpits or groin
- Persistent fatigue
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Shortness of breath
- Unexplained weight loss

When to see a doctor

Make an appointment with your doctor if you have any persistent signs or symptoms that worry you.

Lymph node clusters

Lymph nodes are bean-sized collections of lymphocytes. About 600 of these nodes cluster throughout the lymphatic system, for example, near the knee, groin, neck and armpits. The nodes are connected by a network of lymphatic vessels.



Swollen lymph nodes

Lymph nodes, such as these lymph nodes in the neck (inset), are located throughout your body. The inset shows three swollen lymph nodes below the lower jaw.

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Causes

Doctors aren't sure what causes lymphoma. But it begins when a disease-fighting white blood cell called a lymphocyte develops a genetic mutation. The mutation tells the cell to multiply rapidly, causing many diseased lymphocytes that continue multiplying.

The mutation also allows the cells to go on living when other cells would die. This causes too many diseased and ineffective lymphocytes in your lymph nodes and causes the lymph nodes to swell.

Risk factors

Factors that can increase the risk of lymphoma include:

- **Your age.** Some types of lymphoma are more common in young adults, while others are most often diagnosed in people over 55.
- **Being male.** Males are slightly more likely to develop lymphoma than are females.
- **Having an impaired immune system.** Lymphoma is more common in people with immune system diseases or in people who take drugs that suppress their immune system.
- **Developing certain infections.** Some infections are associated with an increased risk of lymphoma, including the Epstein-Barr virus and *Helicobacter pylori* infection.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

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