

# Living with Non Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL)

## A Quick Guide

### Contents

This is a brief summary of 'Living with non Hodgkin lymphoma' from our website. You will find more detailed information on the website. There are sections on

- Coping with NHL
- Sex and fertility and NHL
- Life after a transplant for NHL
- Questions for your doctor
- NHL organisations

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

### Coping with non Hodgkin lymphoma

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of non Hodgkin lymphoma, both practically and emotionally. You are likely to be feeling very upset and confused.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that any diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell that you have cancer? And how do you find the words? There may be children to consider.

The coping with cancer section of our website contains lots of information you may find helpful including information about counselling, financial issues and much more.

### Sex and non Hodgkin lymphoma

During your treatment, if you have a very low platelet count, intercourse may not be recommended because of the risk of bleeding. Discuss this with your doctor or nurse if you are not sure.

If you are a man having chemotherapy, you should always wear a condom. This is because semen can cause a stinging sensation in the woman's vagina if her partner is having chemotherapy. This means some of the drug may be coming through and doctors don't know enough about whether this could be harmful.

If you are a woman having chemotherapy, you should make sure you use contraception. The drugs you are having could damage a developing baby. Even if your periods have stopped it may be possible to get pregnant, so you should take precautions.

### Treatment and your risk of becoming infertile

Some chemotherapy treatment for non Hodgkin lymphoma can cause infertility. If possible, doctors will use drugs that do not cause infertility. But the first priority is treating your non Hodgkin lymphoma.

If you become infertile you will not be able to have children after your treatment. Having a bone marrow or stem cell transplant will almost certainly mean you will be infertile.

### **Life after a transplant for NHL**

It takes a long time to get over intensive treatment such as a bone marrow or stem cell transplant. You may have to go back into hospital once or twice. And it may be a year before you really feel you are on the road to recovery.

For the first few months you will need to take special precautions to avoid infection. This means avoiding foods that might cause food poisoning or carry infections. You will also be advised to avoid crowded places, and not to be with people who have come into contact with infections like chicken pox.

### **School, college or work**

You will not be able to go back to normal daily activity until your white cell count is nearing normal. It is a good idea to start back part time. Talk to your employer, teacher or tutor about this. You may also want to think about whether you would like them to talk to your colleagues or other students about your illness.

### **Exercise, travel and your sex life**

Exercise will help you get your strength back. But while your platelet count is still low, you have to be careful about getting knocks. Once all your blood counts are getting back to normal you can do just about anything. If you want to travel abroad, talk to your doctors. You cannot fly if your platelets are too low. A transplant does not physically stop you from having your normal sex life. But you may find that your sex drive is low for a while.

### **What to ask your doctor about living with non Hodgkin lymphoma**

- How long will it take me to get over my treatment?
- What precautions will I have to take while I am recovering?
- When can I go back to school / college / work?
- When can I take up my usual sports, hobbies and activities again?
- Is there anything I shouldn't do?
- Is there anyone who can advise me on money matters, including benefit claims?
- What practical help is available?
- I would like to see a counsellor. Can you put me in touch with someone to talk to?
- Will we have to pay for counselling?
- Can I go abroad on holiday when I finish treatment?
- Will you write a letter to help me get travel insurance?
- Which vaccinations can I have?

If you've had a transplant you may also want to ask

- When will I be able to use public transport, or go to crowded places?
- What should I do if my children / grandchildren get a cold or other infection?
- Should I avoid contact with animals and if so, for how long?
- Will my treatment make me infertile?
- Is there any chemotherapy that doesn't cause infertility?
- What contraception should we use while I am having treatment and for how long afterwards?
- Can I have sperm banking / egg collection before I start my treatment?
- Can you arrange sperm banking or egg collection for me?
- How much does sperm banking / egg collection cost?
- Will I have an early menopause?
- What symptoms can I expect?
- Will I be able to take HRT and is there anything I should know to help me decide whether to take it?

## Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma Organisations

### Cancer Research UK

Website: [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

Cancer Information Nurse 0808 800 4040

### The Lymphoma Association

Tel: 0808 808 5555 (9am-6pm Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm

Friday)

Website: [www.lymphomas.org.uk](http://www.lymphomas.org.uk)

### Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research

Tel: 020 7504 2200

Website: [www.leukaemialymphomaresearch.org.uk](http://www.leukaemialymphomaresearch.org.uk)

Email: [info@beatbloodcancer.org.uk](mailto:info@beatbloodcancer.org.uk)

**For more information**, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK.

Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in October 2014. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)