

Living with Hodgkin lymphoma

A Quick Guide

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

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

Coping with Hodgkin lymphoma

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of Hodgkin's 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.

Support is available at the hospital and from support groups. Getting the support you need will help you cope. This may be emotional support or more practical help, such as dealing with money matters. The coping with cancer section of our website contains lots of information you may find helpful.

Sex and Hodgkin lymphoma

If you have a very low platelet count during your treatment, 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 need to 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.

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

Treatment and your risk of becoming infertile

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

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 have contact with people who have come into contact with infections such as chicken pox.

School, college or work

You won't be able to go back to normal daily activity until your white cell count is nearly 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 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 can't 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 Hodgkin lymphoma

- How long will it take me to get over my treatment?
- What precautions will I have to take while I am recovering?
- What about diet?
- What practical help is available?
- When can I go back to school / college / work?
- Can I take up my usual hobbies and sports again?
- Can I go abroad on holiday?
- Which vaccinations should I have?
- Can I drink alcohol?
- When will I be able to use public transport or go to crowded places?
- Will the treatment make me infertile?
- Is there other chemotherapy I can have which won't cause infertility?
- Can I have sperm banking before I start treatment?
- Who can arrange sperm banking for me?
- How much does sperm banking cost?
- Can I store eggs before treatment?
- Could I have ovarian tissue freezing?
- Will I have an early menopause after my treatment?
- What symptoms will early menopause cause?
- Do you recommend HRT?
- When should I start HRT?
- Can you put my partner and I in touch with a counsellor?
- How much will counselling cost?

Hodgkin lymphoma organisations

Cancer Research UK

Website: <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer>

Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

The Lymphoma Association

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

Website: www.lymphomas.org.uk

Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research

Tel: 020 7504 2200

Website: <http://leukaemialymphomaresearch.org.uk/>

Email: info@beatbloodcancers.org

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/about-cancer>

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.

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