

What is Hodgkin lymphoma? — Hodgkin lymphoma (which used to be called "Hodgkin's disease") is a type of lymphoma. Lymphoma is a cancer of white blood cells called "lymphocytes."

Normally, lymphocytes help the body fight infection. When a person has lymphoma, the lymphocytes become abnormal, grow out of control, and travel to different parts of the body. The abnormal cells often collect in bean-shaped organs called lymph nodes. This can make the lymph nodes swell. They can also affect other parts of the lymphatic system, such as the spleen ([figure 1](#)).

What are the symptoms of Hodgkin lymphoma? — Most people with Hodgkin lymphoma first notice a swollen, painless lymph node in the neck. People can also have swollen lymph nodes above the collar bone, or in the armpit or groin.

Lymph nodes deeper in the body can become swollen and cause symptoms. For example, swollen lymph nodes in the chest can cause a cough, trouble breathing, or chest pain.

Some people can also have:

- Fever
- Weight loss
- Drenching sweats

Is there a test for Hodgkin lymphoma? — Yes. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you and do an exam. They will also do:

- Blood tests
- A lymph node biopsy – For a biopsy, a doctor will remove one of the swollen lymph nodes. It will be examined cells under a microscope to see if lymphoma cells are present.

What is lymphoma staging? — Lymphoma staging is a way in which doctors find out how far the lymphoma has spread in the lymphatic system or in the body.

Hodgkin lymphoma usually starts in lymph nodes in the neck or chest. If the cancer spreads, it usually spreads to nearby lymph nodes, and then to organs such as the spleen or liver.

To check how far your Hodgkin lymphoma has spread, your doctor will do an exam, blood tests, and an imaging test, such as a CT or PET scan. Imaging tests create pictures of the inside of the body.

Your doctor might also do a bone marrow biopsy. For this test, a doctor will take a small sample of bone marrow (the tissue in the center of your bones). The sample is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells.

The right treatment for you depends a lot on the stage of your Hodgkin lymphoma.

How is Hodgkin lymphoma treated? — Treatment can include:

- Chemotherapy – Chemotherapy is the medical term for medicines that kill cancer cells or stop them from growing. Doctors can use different chemotherapy medicines to treat Hodgkin lymphoma. Your doctor will work with you to choose the ones that are right for you.

- Radiation therapy – Radiation kills cancer cells. It is used along with chemotherapy for some people with Hodgkin lymphoma.

People whose Hodgkin lymphoma doesn't get better with treatment or comes back after treatment might have a bone marrow transplant. This is sometimes called a "stem cell transplant."

In most cases, proper treatment can cure Hodgkin lymphoma.

What else should I know about treatment? — Some treatments for Hodgkin lymphoma can increase a person's chance of getting another type of cancer in the future. For example, women who get radiation therapy to the chest can have an increased chance of getting breast cancer years later. Talk with your doctor about what you can do to check for or prevent other cancers in the future.

What else should I do? — It's important to follow all your doctor's instructions about visits and tests. It's also important to talk to your doctor about any side effects or problems you have during treatment.

Getting treated for Hodgkin lymphoma involves making many choices, such as what treatment to have and when.

Always let your doctors and nurses know how you feel about a treatment. Any time you are offered a treatment, ask:

- What are the benefits of this treatment? Is it likely to help me live longer? Will it reduce or prevent symptoms?
- What are the risks to this treatment?
- Are there other options besides this treatment?
- What happens if I do not have this treatment?