

Living with Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL) - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with non Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL)' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

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

Coping with non Hodgkin's lymphoma

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of 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 a diagnosis of lymphoma brings, you may also have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell that you have lymphoma? And how do you find the words? You may also have children to think about.

The 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK has lots of helpful information. There are sections on your feelings, helping yourself, how others can help you, and financial matters.

Sex and fertility and non Hodgkin's 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 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 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 Hodgkin's lymphoma can cause infertility. If possible, doctors will use drugs that do not cause infertility. But the first priority is treating your non Hodgkin's 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 have contact with people who have come into contact with infections like chicken pox.

School, college or work

You will not be able to get back to your usual daily life 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 for your doctor about living with NHL

- Is there anyone who can help me sort out my money worries?
- What practical help is available?
- 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?
- Can I take up my usual sports, hobbies and activities again?
- Can I go abroad on holiday? Will you write a letter for my insurance company?
- Which vaccinations can I have?
- Can I drink alcohol?
- When will I be able to use public transport, or go to crowded places?
- Will my treatment make me infertile?
- Is there other chemotherapy I can have which will not make me infertile?
- What contraception should we use while I am having chemo?
- Can I have sperm banking before I start my chemo? Can you arrange this for me?
- How much does sperm banking cost?
- Will I have an early menopause?
- What symptoms can I expect?



- Do you recommend HRT? What can you tell me about it?
- My partner and I would like to see a counsellor. Can you put us in touch with someone?
- Will we have to pay for counselling?

Notes

Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma Organisations

Cancer Research UK
 Main website: www.cancerresearchuk.org
 Patient information website:
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

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 7405 0101
 website: www.beatbloodcancers.org.uk
 Email: info@beatbloodcancer.org.uk

More information

For more information about non Hodgkin's lymphoma, visit our website
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

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 cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

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 May 2011. 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. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).