

LEARNING ABOUT LYMPHOMA

»» Where does lymphoma start?

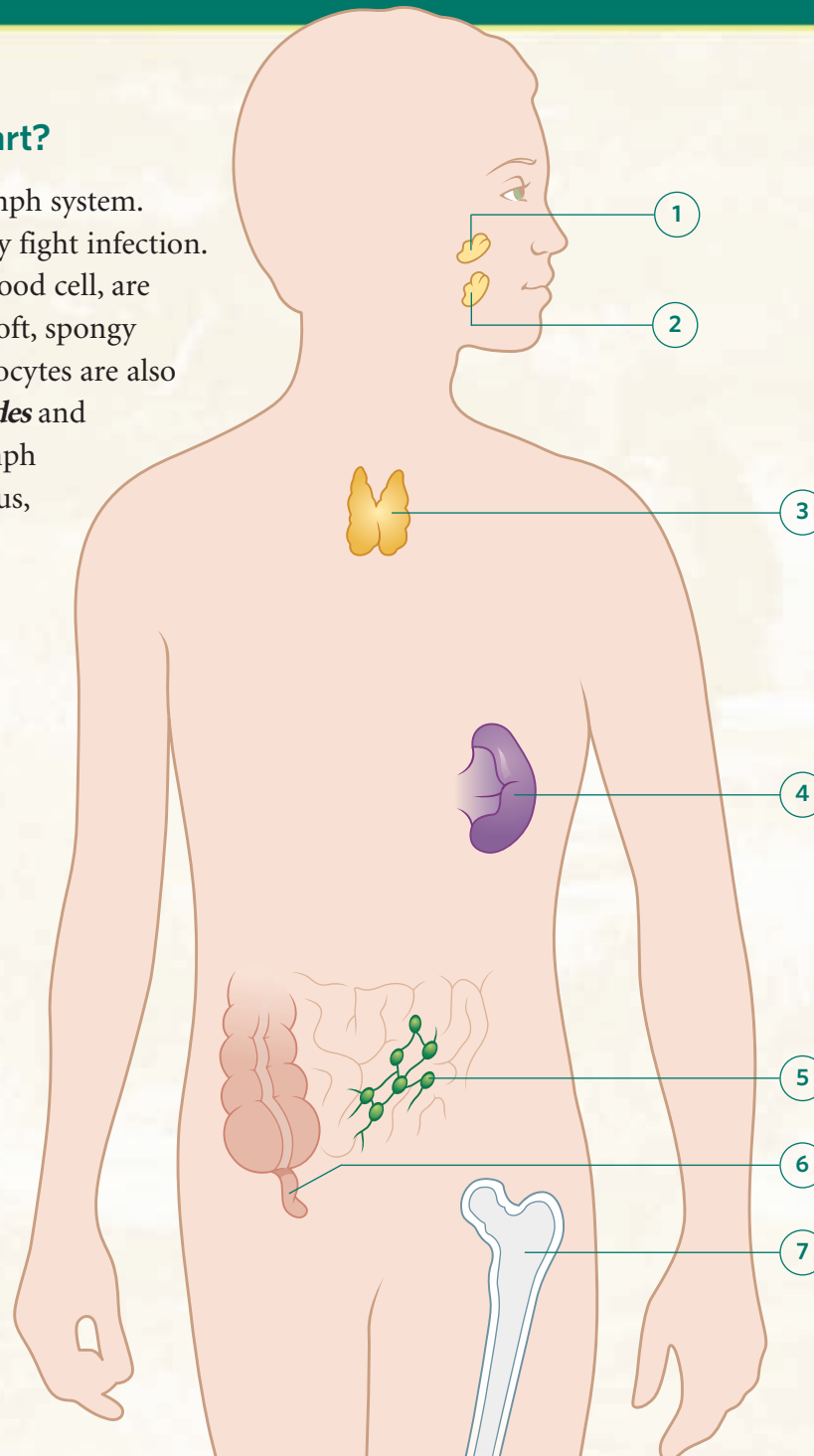
Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymph system. The lymph system helps the body fight infection.

Lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, are made in the bone marrow (the soft, spongy tissue inside the bones). Lymphocytes are also made in glands called **lymph nodes** and found in other organs of the lymph system, such as the tonsils, thymus, and spleen. These tissues and organs are connected by thin tubes called **lymphatic vessels**.

Lymphomas may start in the lymph nodes (see picture to right) or in these organs in the lymph system:

- 1 Adenoids
- 2 Tonsils
- 3 Thymus
- 4 Spleen
- 5 Lining of the small intestine
- 6 Appendix
- 7 Bone marrow

Helpful terms are listed on the back.



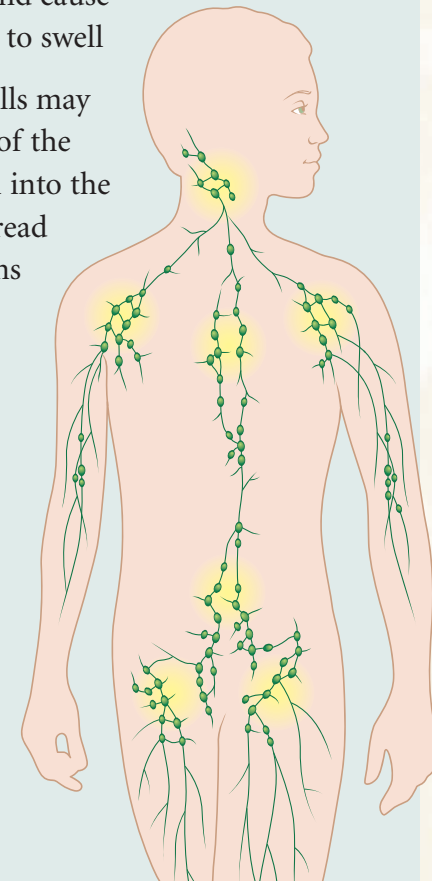
What goes wrong in lymphoma?

Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymph system.

- The lymph system makes 3 kinds of lymphocytes that help fight infection: B cells, T cells, and natural killer (NK) cells
- These cells become abnormal and grow out of control. They turn into lymphomas and cause lymph glands to swell
- The cancer cells may also spill out of the lymph system into the blood and spread to other organs

Lymph nodes commonly involved in lymphoma are in the:

- Neck
- Upper chest
- Armpit
- Abdomen
- Groin



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Terms that are helpful to know

Here are some of the medical terms you may come across as you learn about lymphoma. Be sure to ask the medical team to explain any terms you do not understand.

anemia (ah-NEEM-ee-ah): a drop in the number of red blood cells in the body, which may cause a person to become very tired, pale, and short of breath.

bone marrow: the soft, spongy tissue inside the bones where blood cells are made.

chemotherapy (KEEM-oh-THARE-ah-pee): use of drugs to kill cancer cells or stop them from growing. Chemotherapy aims to quickly destroy lymphoma cells.

immunotherapy (IM-yoo-no-THARE-ah-pee): a treatment using proteins made in the laboratory that attach to lymphoma cells and destroy them.

infection (in-FEK-shun): an attack on the body by germs (such as viruses, bacteria, or fungi) that can make a person feel sick. Cancer treatment can make it harder for the body to fight infections.

leukocytes (LOO-ko-sites): another name for white blood cells.

lymphocyte (LIM-foe-site): a type of white blood cell that helps fight infection. The body makes 3 kinds of lymphocytes: B cells, T cells, and NK cells.

lymph nodes: small glands throughout the body that make and store lymphocytes. Swelling of the lymph nodes may be the first sign of lymphoma.

neutrophil (NOO-tro-fil): a type of white blood cell that is the main cell that fights infection. A big drop in the number of neutrophils increases the chance of getting an infection.

platelets (PLATE-lets): blood cells that help stop bleeding.

radiation therapy (RAE-dee-AY-shun THARE-ah-pee): use of high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells or reduce the size of a tumor (group of cancer cells).

Reed-Sternberg cells: cancer cells found in almost all people with Hodgkin lymphoma.

relapse: when cancer comes back after it had responded to treatment.

remission (REE-mish-uhn): when cancer cells cannot be found, and body function is normal.

spleen: an organ near the stomach that makes lymphocytes and gets rid of worn out blood cells. In some people with lymphoma, the spleen may get very big.

stem cells: cells in the bone marrow that make all the different types of blood cells.

stem cell transplantation (TRANS-plan-TAE-shun): a procedure that replaces blood cells killed off after chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy with healthy cells that can make new blood cells.

thymus (THIGH-mus): a small organ behind the breastbone where T-cell lymphocytes are made.

Where to learn more

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/lymphoma
800-4-CANCER/800-422-6237

Lymphoma Research Foundation

www.lymphoma.org
800-500-9976

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