Hodgkin Lymphoma

What is Hodgkin Lymphoma?

Hodgkin Lymphoma is a form of cancer, which affects the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is the body’s natural defence against infection. It is made up of a collection of lymph glands located throughout the body in the neck, armpits, chest, abdomen and groin. These glands are connected to tiny lymph vessels. The tonsils and spleen also belong to the lymphatic system. Lymphomas are split into two types: Hodgkin Lymphoma and Non–Hodgkin Lymphoma.

Who gets Hodgkin Lymphoma?

It is quite rare in children under 5 years but has an increased incidence in ages 15-19. For unknown reasons it is more common in boys than girls.

What causes Hodgkin Lymphoma?

The cause is unknown, with no proven risk factors. It is not something that can be caught or passed onto others.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The most common is a painless swelling of a lymph node, most often in the neck or armpit, which won’t go away. Sometimes this is the only symptom. Other symptoms include night sweats, itching, weight loss, tiredness and fever.

What tests will be performed?

The initial diagnosis will be established by a biopsy of a lymph node. This will usually require a minor operation to remove an affected node. Afterwards, further tests will be done to establish the spread of the disease, which is essential for planning appropriate treatment.

These tests will include:

- A detailed physical examination along with a personal and family history
• Blood tests – initially to help detect certain cells in the blood then taken regularly to measure the effects of treatment.
• Chest x-ray - looks for enlarged glands or involvement of lung tissue
• CT scan (CAT scan) - a 3 dimensional x-ray to search for hidden gland enlargement
• Gallium Scan
• Bone marrow biopsy – will be performed if there is evidence to suggest widespread disease

Please refer to the procedure section for further information about particular tests.

How is Hodgkin Lymphoma treated?
This will depend on the spread of disease in the body, along with the age, growth and health of the child. Chemotherapy is the main treatment used. Other treatment includes radiotherapy, and if relapse occurs, high dose chemotherapy with stem cell transplant support may be considered. Your doctor will discuss all of these factors with you.

Further information about chemotherapy and its side effects is contained in the treatment and supportive care section of the handbook.

What is my child’s Prognosis?
Prognosis varies between people therefore it’s best to discuss this with your doctor who can give you specific information that relates to your child.

Bibliography
Audio Health Library topic 1117, (Online accessed 13/3/02), Hodgkin Disease
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Hodgkin Disease, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Haematology Department

National Cancer Institute, Childhood Hodgkin Disease, University of Bonn, Medical Center net. URL: http://www.meb.uni-bonn.de/cancernet/203043.html

The Lymphomas, Leukaemia Research Fund


**Further Information**

For further information see the section ‘Sources of more information on cancer’ information or ask any member of the team.