

Remission

Complete remission means that there's no longer evidence of lymphoma in your body. Partial remission means that there's less lymphoma in your body than there was before.

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What is the aim of lymphoma treatment?

For some **types of lymphoma, treatment** aims to get rid of **all** of the lymphoma and send it into **complete remission** (no evidence of lymphoma in **tests and scans**). This is usually the case with **Hodgkin lymphoma** and **high-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma**.

For other types of lymphoma, such as some types of **skin lymphoma**, treatment aims to control the lymphoma and send it into **partial remission**. This means that there's less lymphoma in your body than there was before you had treatment.

In May 2017 I got the news I had been waiting for. I was clear of the lymphoma for now, and was officially in remission. The chemotherapy was followed by maintenance rituximab injections for 2 years every 8 weeks, and I went back to work in the October. I have been told by my GP that I will never climb mountains, but I am more than happy and take every day as it comes.
Kevin, in remission from non-Hodgkin lymphoma

Complete remission

Complete remission means that:

- your **symptoms of lymphoma** have gone
- there's no evidence of lymphoma in your body from **tests and scans after treatment**.

Some doctors prefer not to use the word 'cure'. This is because there could still be a very small amount of lymphoma in your body that doesn't show up in scan images.

In general, the longer you are in complete remission, the less likely your lymphoma is to come back (**relapse**). If your lymphoma does relapse, there are still effective treatment options.

Depending on the usual practice of your hospital, you might be referred back to your GP for health checks after a certain number of years in remission. This depends on factors such as your **lymphoma type**, the **treatment** you have had and how long it's been since you completed treatment. **Follow-up** might also differ if you were treated as part of a **clinical trial**.

Partial remission

Partial remission means one of the following:

- there are fewer lymphoma cells in your body
- lymphoma is affecting fewer parts of your body than it was before.

You might still have some **symptoms of lymphoma**.

Usually, doctors use the term 'partial remission' if your lymphoma has reduced by at least half of its original size at diagnosis.

I had a PET scan before treatment started and then CT scans to see how the lymphoma was responding. I was thrilled to hear that the lymphoma was responding to the treatment and the scan at the end showed that the tumour had shrunk by 95%. I decided to try out a support group. Although I was apprehensive, I've found the group really supportive from the first visit, and I've made many new friends.

Clare, in remission from follicular lymphoma

Treatment for **low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma** is often very effective at putting lymphoma into partial remission. It is unlikely to go into complete remission because the slow-growing cells in low-grade lymphomas are hard to get rid of completely.

The past 14 years has been a rollercoaster of emotions and, at times, it feels like someone else's story. The first 5 years after treatment is a blur. Since then, I've felt everything from denial to anger, and now I'm finally at acceptance. I'm grateful for my health and the journey I've been on. Lymphoma has played a huge part in this and it has certainly made me stronger than I ever thought I could be. I'm immensely proud of what I have achieved in the past 14 years and I am looking forward to many more adventures to come.

Blair, in remission from diffuse large B-cell lymphoma

How long does remission last?

Hodgkin lymphoma and **high-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma** often goes into complete remission and needs no further treatment. However, some people **relapse** and need more treatment.

Many people with **low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma** have full or partial remission that lasts for many months or even years **after treatment for lymphoma**. Most of these people have different treatments over time. This is because it usually comes back (**relapses**) or worsens at some point, and then needs further treatment.

Some people don't have any treatment for their lymphoma right away. **Active monitoring ('watch and wait')** might instead be recommended. This is where you have regular check-ups with your medical team to monitor your health and to see how the lymphoma is affecting you. Watch and wait is a common approach with low-grade (slow-growing) types of lymphoma in people who are not experiencing troublesome symptoms.

Some people therefore think of low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma as a long-term (chronic) illness that needs treatment from time-to-time.

Your medical team will offer any **follow-up appointments** that are appropriate for you. However, contact them if you have any questions or concerns – don't wait until your next appointment.

Remission and your emotions

Remission can bring mixed feelings. For example, some people worry about the possibility of their lymphoma **relapsing**. Although relapsed lymphoma can be treated again, living with the uncertainty of relapse can be difficult to cope with **emotionally**.

I've been in remission for a year and I find the aftermath of cancer hard to deal with. When I was told I was in remission, I felt euphoric and was very excited the whole day. But very soon afterwards, I felt numb – and then I felt bad for feeling that way.

Raveen, in remission from Hodgkin lymphoma

Following a healthy lifestyle can help you to **live well with and beyond lymphoma**, and to adjust physically and emotionally. It also helps to put you in a good position to receive treatment if and when you need it in the future. You might hear this called **'prehabilitation' (getting ready for treatment)**. A **healthy lifestyle** includes good **diet and nutrition**, building **exercise and physical activity** into your life, **getting enough sleep**, making time to relax, and **managing stress**. It's also important to **limit your alcohol intake** and **not to smoke**. Take care to **protect your skin in the sun** too.

Remember that we are **here to support you**, for example through our **buddy service** and **support groups**. You might also be interested in our **Live your Life** peer-led self-management course, designed for people who have **completed treatment** or who are on **active monitoring (watch and wait)**.

I have been in remission for 14 years. It hasn't always been plain sailing, with 'chemo brain' taking longer to overcome than anticipated. Also, seeing my husband recover from the strain of watching me suffer and his feeling of impotence at not being able to help with the range of emotions I felt on recovering from lymphoma. Learning to live with lymphoma brings regular reminders of the trauma, for example, from TV programmes. I am alive and living life to the full as a very different person to the one who was first diagnosed with lymphoma. I am now a cancer buddy at my local hospital and I volunteer with Lymphoma Action.

Kathleen, in remission from non-Hodgkin lymphoma

References

The full list of references for this page is available on our website. Alternatively, email publications@lymphoma-action.org.uk or call 01296 619409 if you would like a copy.

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