

Treatment and remission

Treatment for lymphoma aims to send the disease into remission. This page explains what remission is and the difference between complete remission and partial remission.

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The aim of lymphoma treatment

The aim of most lymphoma treatments is to send your lymphoma into remission. Remission means that the amount of lymphoma in your body has reduced or gone altogether. There are different types of remission, depending on how much your lymphoma has been reduced. For some [types of lymphoma](#), treatment aims to get rid of all of the lymphoma and send it into complete remission. For other types of lymphoma, treatment aims to control the lymphoma and send it into partial remission.

Complete remission

Complete remission means your symptoms have gone and there is no evidence of lymphoma in your body in tests and scans at the end of your treatment. Your doctor might not use the word 'cure' because there might be a tiny amount of lymphoma left in your body that can't be detected using available techniques. However, the longer you are in complete remission, the less likely your lymphoma is to come back ([relapse](#)).

Hodgkin lymphoma and **high-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma** are usually treated with the aim of sending the lymphoma into complete remission. For most people with these types of lymphoma, the disease is unlikely to relapse after successful treatment.

Partial remission

Partial remission means your lymphoma has reduced (there are fewer lymphoma cells in your body or it is affecting fewer parts of your body) but it has not gone completely. Usually, partial remission means your lymphoma has reduced by at least half. Sometimes doctors talk about 'remission with residual abnormality' (some disease leftover) to describe a partial response to treatment. You might still have some symptoms of lymphoma following a partial remission.

Low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma is likely to respond well to treatment but it is unlikely to go into complete remission because the slow-growing cells in low-grade lymphomas are hard to get rid of completely. Low-grade lymphoma is therefore usually treated with the aim of sending it into as good a partial remission as possible. This means that the lymphoma and any symptoms you have are reduced as much as possible. This is sometimes called 'controlling' the lymphoma rather than curing it.

Low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma can often be controlled for many years and as treatment options improve, remissions are lasting longer. However, low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma usually comes back (**relapses**) or gets worse (progresses) at some point. This might not be for many months or years. Although a relapse can be very distressing, many people are treated successfully again. Most people with low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma have several different **treatments** over the course of their illness. It helps some people to think of it as a long-term (chronic) disease that needs treatment from time-to-time.

We have separate information about the topics in **bold font**. Please get in touch if you'd like to request copies or if you would like further information about any aspect of lymphoma. Phone 0808 808 5555 or email information@lymphoma-action.org.uk.

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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