

Being referred for tests and scans

If you feel unwell or have any **symptoms of lymphoma**, the first health professional you are likely to see is your GP. Depending on what your GP thinks might be causing your symptoms, they might refer you for further tests.

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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.

What tests can my GP do?

Many GP surgeries now offer an initial consultation by telephone or videocall. Once you have discussed your symptoms, they might ask you to go to see them in person.

When you have a face-to-face appointment, your GP will ask you about any symptoms you have. You are also likely to have an examination of your body. This might include checking for any swollen (enlarged) **lymph nodes**. These can appear as lumps under your skin. One or more swollen lymph nodes is the most common **symptom of lymphoma**. However, most people who have swollen lymph nodes do **not** have lymphoma – usually, swollen lymph nodes are a sign of a less serious illness, such as a minor infection.

If you have a swollen lump or lumps that:

- have only been there for up to a couple of weeks
- are very small

your GP might suggest waiting for 2 to 3 weeks to see if your symptoms get better and the lump goes away.

If your symptoms continue, if they are severe, or if you have a lump that gets bigger, you should go back to your GP. They are likely to refer you for tests.

Your GP won't be able to tell just from examining you whether or not you have lymphoma. You might have simple tests like **blood tests** or a **electrocardiogram (ECG)** test at your GP practice. However, to determine whether or not you have lymphoma, you would need to be referred for further tests at the hospital. Usually, this includes having a **biopsy** – a small operation done under with anaesthetic. It takes a sample of tissue to look at under a microscope.

Many people feel anxious while **waiting for test results**. While this is natural, remember that a referral for tests and scans does not automatically mean that you will go on to be diagnosed with lymphoma.

How long will I wait for tests and scans?

If your GP thinks there is a possibility that you have lymphoma, you should be seen quickly by a hospital specialist.

- In England and Ireland, you can expect to wait up to 2 weeks from the time the hospital receives the referral request (electronically or by post).
- There is no specific waiting time in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; however, you should receive an appointment as soon as possible. Ask your GP how long this is likely to be.

You might be given an appointment at quite short notice and it's important to attend if you can.

Frequently asked questions about being referred for tests and scans

In this section, we answer some of the questions people often ask about being referred for tests and scans for lymphoma. Speak to your GP or a member of your medical team if you have questions or concerns about your specific situation.

How will I be told about my appointment?

You are likely to be told about your hospital appointment by phone, post or email. For some services, the GP or practice nurse might be able to book you an appointment while you're there and tell you straight away. You should be given information about where to go for your tests and scans, which health professionals you'll see and anything you need to do to prepare.

The NHS website has information about [booking, cancelling and changing an appointment](#).

Will I be referred to my local hospital?

You should be referred to the nearest possible hospital for the appointments you need, but this might not be your local hospital. This is because not all hospitals have lymphoma specialists or the equipment to carry out the [tests and scans](#) you might need.

In most cases, you have a right to choose which hospital you go to for treatment. The NHS website has information about the [choices available to you in the NHS](#).

What tests am I likely to have?

The tests and scans you have will depend on your symptoms and what your doctor thinks might be the problem.

Usually, a [biopsy](#) is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of lymphoma. This is a small operation that takes a sample of tissue to look at under a microscope.

We have more information about [tests and scans for lymphoma](#).

Can I take someone with me?

You might choose to take someone with you to your appointments to provide emotional support. You could also ask them to help you to remember any questions you wanted to ask or to note down the information you are given.

For some tests and scans, for example an **MRI scan**, it won't be possible for friends or family members to be in the same room as you. However, they can still go with you to the hospital and wait in a different room.

What should I do if I'd like a second opinion?

If, at any time, you would like another opinion about your health and social care, you are entitled to ask for this. You can find out more about **waiting for your results**. Remember that our **helpline services team is here to support you** if you'd like to talk about any aspect of 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.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the following people for reviewing this information:

- Simon Gifford, ICS Cancer Programme Lead, Frimley Health.
- Dr Bhupinder Sharma, Radiology Consultant, The Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.
- We would like to thank the members of our Reader Panel who gave their time to review this information.

Content last reviewed: November 2020
Next planned review: November 2023
LYMweb0230Referral2020v2

✓	Evidence-based
✓	Approved by experts
✓	Reviewed by users

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