

# Remission

Remission means that your body has responded positively to treatment. 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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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](mailto:information@lymphoma-action.org.uk).

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## What is the aim of lymphoma treatment?

The aim of lymphoma treatment is usually remission.

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 [low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma](#) and 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.

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## 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**.

Even when you are in complete remission, 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.

Depending on the usual practice of your hospital, you will continue to see your **medical team** whilst in remission. This might be in the form of **supported self-management**. If you have any concerns, at any time, you can still contact your key contact, usually your clinical nurse specialist. You are likely to 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**.

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 usually still effective treatment options available.

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## 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.

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. If your lymphoma does relapse, there are usually still effective treatment options available.

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## How long does remission last?

How long remission lasts depends on many factors, including the type of lymphoma you have. Your medical team are best placed to advise you based on your individual circumstances.

**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**. There are effective treatment options available if this is the case.

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**. Over time, though, low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphomas usually come back (**relapses**) or worsens at some point and need **more treatment**. Most people have several different treatments over the course of their illness. Some people therefore think of low-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma as a long-term (chronic) illness that needs treatment from time-to-time.

For some types of lymphoma, once you are in remission, you might be offered **maintenance therapy**. This is treatment given after an initial course of treatment has put your lymphoma into remission. It aims to make your remission last as long as possible, by keeping any lymphoma cells left in your body under control. It is often a long-term treatment that can last several years. This treatment is usually well tolerated and can be incorporated into everyday life.

For other types of lymphoma, if you have responded well to treatment, you might be offered a **stem cell transplant** to increase your chance of having a longer-lasting remission from lymphoma.

**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**.

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## 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**. If you are struggling, **talk to us** or your medical team – we can offer support and signpost to others who can help.

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At the end of the chemotherapy, I was told I was in remission. I have mixed emotions about being discharged, as I feel that the regular contact with my medical team is like a safety net. They explained that if I have any concerns, I can just call them, which I have found reassuring.

*Samantha, diagnosed with nodular lymphocyte-predominant Hodgkin lymphoma*

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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. 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.

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I was back in Cornwall and alone on a beach listening to the waves when I was told I was in complete remission. On that beach, at that moment, I had been told the best news ever!

That was such a special moment, but I also want to add that since then I have had low days, especially the week after I was told about the remission. I found myself reflecting on everything I have been through – the endless appointments, the 22 tablets a day and the chemotherapy drugs. But then it just stops and I felt lost in a way.

*Matthew, diagnosed with diffuse large B-cell lymphoma*

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Remember that we are **here to support you**, for example through our **buddy service** and **support groups**. We have **support groups specifically for those in remission**. You might 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). We also have information for [anyone who is caring for someone who has lymphoma](#).

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The aftermath of cancer is really hard to deal with. You've been wrapped in cotton wool for months, then suddenly you're better – which is obviously great – but it feels like no-one cares any more. When I was told I was in remission, I remember feeling euphoric. I was very excited the whole day. But very soon afterwards I felt numb – and then I felt bad for feeling that way. You're trying to adjust to the emotional impact of being ill, then being in remission, and it's really hard. You experience such a range of emotions and it all feels a little like a dream.

*Raveen, diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma*

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## References

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

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