

FACT SHEET

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Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia is the most common form of adult leukemia and accounts for one-third of all leukemias in the United States. In 2010, it was estimated that nearly 15,000 new chronic lymphocytic leukemia cases were diagnosed and nearly 4,500 people died from the disease.¹ Additionally, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society has noted that nearly 90,000 people are living with the disease.² There is currently no cure.³

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia is a slow-growing form of cancer that occurs when abnormal or malignant white blood cells (lymphocytes) are found in the blood and bone marrow. These abnormal cells outnumber the normal white blood cells, making it difficult for the body to fight infection.^{2,4} While the cause is unknown, chronic lymphocytic leukemia occurs in B-cells, a type of white blood cell.³

Risk Factors And Symptoms

- **Age** – largely a disease of older adults, the average age of diagnosis is 72 years⁵
- **Gender/ethnicity** – for unknown reasons, the disease occurs more frequently in men than women and has a higher incidence in certain ethnic groups^{1,6}
- **Symptoms** – include fatigue, paleness, weight loss, repeated infections, swollen lymph nodes or spleen, nosebleeds or hemorrhages^{1,2}
- **Screening** – no screening tests for early detection are available, but a diagnosis can be made from blood tests and a bone marrow biopsy^{1,2}

Prognosis And Survival

- Chronic lymphocytic leukemia can progress slowly, often with few symptoms; some people may not experience any signs, symptoms or changes in their health for many years; others can progress very quickly^{2,6}
- Approximately 75 percent of people with chronic lymphocytic leukemia will survive at least five years¹

Treatment

- Treatment varies based on the type or stage of cancer, overall health of the patient, and the presence or absence of symptoms; common treatment approaches include watch and wait

or observation, chemotherapy, targeted medicine (monoclonal antibody) and bone marrow transplantation^{2,6,7}

- Ongoing research continues to develop options to help people achieve a goal of living without the disease worsening for longer periods of time^{2,3}

References

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