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Understanding **Lymphoma**



What is Lymphoma

Lymphoma is a type of Cancer that affects the Lymphatic System, a key part of the body's immune system. The lymphatic system includes lymph nodes, spleen, thymus, and bone marrow. Lymphoma occurs when abnormal lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, multiply uncontrollably.

Types of Lymphoma

Hodgkins Lymphoma (HL)

- It is characterised by the presence of reed-sternberg cells, large abnormal cells found in lymph nodes
- It usually starts in a single lymph node or a group of lymph nodes before spreading
- It tends to progress in an orderly and predictable manner

Types

- Classical Hodgkin's Lymphoma (CHL) and Nodular Lymphocyte-Predominant Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NLPHL) are the two main types
- Classical Hodgkin's Lymphoma is further divided into various subtypes, including Nodular Sclerosis, Mixed Cellularity, Lymphocyte Depletion, and Lymphocyte-Rich

Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma (NHL)

- It is more common than Hodgkin's Lymphoma and comprises a diverse group of Lymphomas
- It arises from different types of lymphocytes, including B cells and T cells

Types

- It has over 60 different subtypes, classified based on cell type, growth pattern, and other features
- Common subtypes include, Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma, Follicular Lymphoma and Mantle Cell Lymphoma

Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause of Lymphoma is not known, but several risk factors may increase the likelihood of developing the condition, including:

- **Age:** Lymphoma can occur at any age, but the risk increases with age
- **Gender:** Certain types of Lymphoma are more common in males
- **Family History:** A family history of Lymphoma may increase the risk
- **Immune System Disorders:** Conditions that weaken the immune system may contribute such as HIV/AIDS or those who have undergone organ transplantation and are taking immunosuppressants

Symptoms

The symptoms of Lymphoma can vary but may include:

- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fever and night sweats
- Fatigue
- Itchy skin
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain

Diagnosis

Diagnosing Lymphoma involves a combination of medical history review, physical examination and diagnostic tests such as:

- Blood tests
- Imaging studies (CT scan, PET scan)
- Biopsy of lymph nodes or other affected tissues

Treatment Options

The choice of treatment depends on the type and stage of Lymphoma, as well as the patient's overall health. Common treatment modalities include:

- **Targeted Chemotherapy:** Medications to kill cancer cells or stop their growth
- **Radiation Therapy:** High-dose X-rays or other forms of radiation to target and kill cancer cells
- **Stem Cell Transplant:** Replacement of damaged bone marrow with healthy stem cells

Living with Lymphoma

- **Follow-up Care:** Regular check-ups are essential to monitor progress and manage potential side effects
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Maintain a balanced diet, engage in regular exercise, and get adequate rest to support overall well-being
- **Emotional Support:** Seek help from friends, family, or support groups to cope with the emotional challenges of living with Lymphoma

While a diagnosis of Lymphoma can be overwhelming, advances in medical science have improved treatment outcomes. It is crucial to work closely with the healthcare team to determine the most appropriate treatment plan according to the type of Lymphoma. Open communication with family members and friends, a healthy lifestyle, and emotional support groups are integral parts of the journey towards managing Lymphoma.