

Information + Taking Control = Better Outcome



Oncology



Hematology

Fast Facts Information Sheets for Patients

Follicular Lymphoma

Follicular Lymphoma

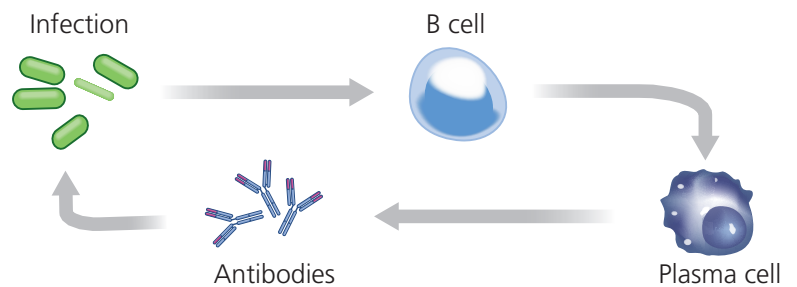
You or a family member have been diagnosed with follicular lymphoma (FL). This leaflet gives you some basic information about the condition and helps answer some of your questions.

What is FL?

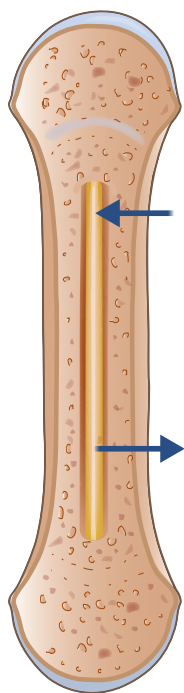
FL is a slow-growing blood cancer and the most common form of lymphoma in adults. FL involves a type of white blood cell called a **lymphocyte**. There are three types of lymphocyte: natural killer cells, T cells, and **B cells**. FL involves B cells. The B cell is one of the most important cells in the body. Its function is to make antibodies to protect against disease and infection. FL affects the **lymph nodes**. Lymph nodes are found throughout your body, especially in the armpits, neck, groin, and abdomen.

Is there a cure for FL?

There is currently no cure but FL is a treatable condition. There are promising new therapies being developed and it's usually possible to keep the disease under control for long periods. Many people with FL have a normal lifespan and a good quality of life.



More about normal blood cell production



Bone marrow is the spongy material found inside larger bones such as your breast bone, spine, ribs, skull, hips, and the long bones of your arms and legs. Blood cells are made in the bone marrow

Three types of blood cell develop in your bone marrow

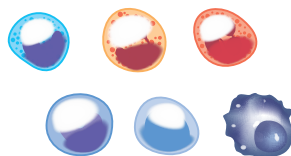
Red blood cells carry oxygen around your body



Platelets help your blood to clot (thicken)



White blood cells fight infection. There are several different types which are important for immunity. One of these types is lymphocytes



Once a B cell is activated, it turns into a plasma cell and starts to make **antibodies**. An antibody is a protein that the body makes to defend itself against something harmful like a virus or bacteria.

What happens in FL?

In FL, B cells in your lymph nodes start to divide uncontrollably. This happens because of genetic changes. These changes are called **mutations**.

The abnormal B cells don't die as normal B cells eventually do, but, instead, they build up in the lymph nodes and cause lumps. The lumps are also called 'clusters'. They are often painless.

B cells move through the body in your blood system and lymphatic system. For this reason, FL cells are often found in other parts of your body, such as your bone marrow and your spleen (located under your ribs on the left side).

How will FL affect me?

Symptoms vary from person to person depending on how the disease develops. You may have:

- **swollen glands.** Most often in your neck or under your arms. This is often the first symptom that people notice.
- **repeated infections** or difficulty shaking off an infection, such as flu.
- **fatigue.** One of the causes of fatigue is anemia. Anemia in FL is caused by not having enough red blood cells.
- **bleeding or bruising easily.** This can happen if you don't have enough platelets to help clot your blood.
- **pain under the ribs on your left side.** This happens if an organ called the spleen fills up with abnormal B cells.
- **B symptoms.** Night sweats, unintended weight loss, and fevers.

Follicular Lymphoma... *contd*

What tests will I have?

The main test to diagnose FL is called a **lymph node biopsy**. A biopsy is when a medical professional removes a small piece of tissue or cells from your body for examination under a microscope in a laboratory.

You may also have **bone marrow tests**. Bone marrow tests can give more information about the progression of the cancer. The test is usually done at a hospital.

You will also have regular blood tests to monitor your general health.

Other testing may include a CT scan or a PET/CT scan. These examinations help your doctors understand more about the lymphoma.

What is the treatment for FL?

For most patients, the aim of treatment is to achieve a partial or complete response to treatment, where the signs of cancer are reduced or disappear. This state is called remission. When there are no signs of disease, in some countries the phrase 'no evidence of disease' (NED) is used.

Treatment for FL is generally:

- **targeted therapies**
- **chemotherapy**.

Most people will receive a combination of both. This is called **chemoimmunotherapy**.

Targeted therapies work by targeting and blocking the action of the proteins that cause cancer cells to grow and divide.

Chemotherapy works by killing cells that multiply rapidly. This includes cancer cells.

A very small number of people may be offered a stem cell transplant. This is a procedure to replace damaged bone marrow which can then produce healthy blood cells.

After diagnosis: what next?

When you receive a diagnosis of FL your doctors will **stage** the cancer. Staging is a description of where the cancer is, if and where it has spread, and what other parts of the body are affected. Knowing the stage of the cancer can help your healthcare team decide whether to begin treatment and what treatment may be beneficial for you. Your doctors will also 'grade' the lymphoma. Grading involves measuring the proportion of enlarged B cells in a sample.

Your healthcare team may decide to begin treatment or you may be one of the many people with FL who are on **active monitoring**. This is also called 'watch and wait'.

What is active monitoring?

On active monitoring, you will see your doctor every 3–6 months. You will have regular check-ups and blood tests. Your doctor will look for any signs that FL is developing.



What now?

If you're on active monitoring you will probably see a **hematologist-oncologist** (a doctor who specializes in blood cancers) every few months. Depending on where you live, you may be assigned a key worker, usually a **clinical nurse specialist**.

If you're having treatment, your care team will be made up of specialist healthcare professionals. Who you see will depend on your symptoms.

You may also see:

- a consultant hematologist (a specialist in blood diseases)
- your primary care physician
- a counselor.

Where you go for your appointments depends on where you live. You may go to a clinic specializing in FL or to the hematology department in your local hospital.

More help and information

Follicular Lymphoma Foundation
www.theflf.org

Lymphoma Action UK
lymphoma-action.org.uk

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
lls.org

Blood Cancer UK
bloodcancer.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support
macmillan.org.uk

Leukaemia Foundation
leukaemia.org.au

Follicular Lymphoma... contd

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www.flmf.org

Blood Cancer UK
bloodcancer.org.uk

Lymphoma Action UK
lymphoma-action.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support
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Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
lls.org

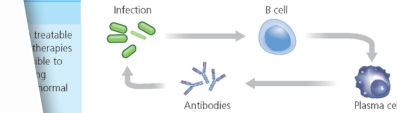
Leukaemia Foundation
leukaemia.org.au

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Red blood cells carry oxygen around your body. **Platelets** help your blood to clot (thicken). **White blood cells** fight infection. There are several different types of white blood cells. One of these is a lymphocyte.

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B cells move through the body in your blood system and lymphatic system. For this reason, FL cells are often found in other parts of your body, such as your bone marrow and your spleen (located under your ribs on the left side).

How the disease develops. You may have: **Swollen lymph nodes** in your arms. This is often the first symptom that people notice. **Infection**, such as flu. **Anemia** in FL is caused by not having enough red blood cells. **Bleeding** if you don't have enough platelets to help clot your blood. **Fever** if an organ called the spleen fills up with abnormal B cells. **Weight loss** and fevers.

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