

Information + Taking Control = Better Outcome



Oncology



Hematology

Fast Facts Information Sheets for Patients

# Marginal Zone Lymphoma

# Marginal Zone Lymphoma

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

## What is MZL?

MZL is a slow-growing blood cancer that involves the lymphatic system and a type of white blood cell called a **lymphocyte**. There are two main types of lymphocyte: T cells and **B cells**. MZL involves B cells. In MZL, abnormal B cells develop and accumulate in different parts of your body.

There are three different types of MZL: **MALT lymphoma**, **splenic MZL**, and **nodal MZL**. MALT lymphoma is divided into two types: **gastric MALT** and **non-gastric MALT**.

## Is there a cure for MZL?

For **gastric MALT MZL** a cure is sometimes possible. For other types a cure is not yet available. However, treatment can usually keep the disease under control for long periods. Many people with MZL have a normal lifespan and a good quality of life.

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. When B cells don't grow or work properly, you may be diagnosed with lymphoma.

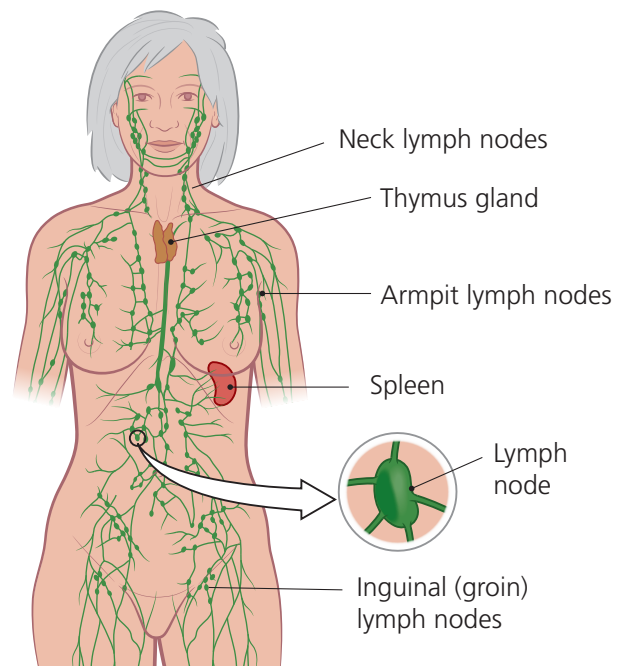
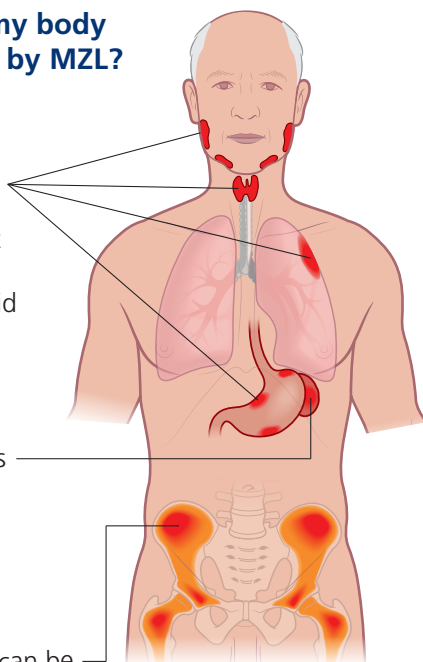
B cells travel around your body in your blood and in your **lymphatic system**. The lymphatic system runs throughout your body and is part of your immune system.

## What parts of my body can be affected by MZL?

MALT lymphoma commonly involves the stomach, but it can also develop in the lung and thyroid and salivary glands

Splenic MZL affects the spleen

The bone marrow can be affected in both splenic MZL and nodal MZL



**Lymph nodes** are part of your lymphatic system. Lymph nodes filter out viruses, bacteria, and damaged blood cells.

## The three types of MZL

MALT lymphoma is the most common type. The most common place for MALT lymphoma to develop is in the stomach. This type is called **gastric MALT lymphoma**.

MALT lymphoma can develop in many other places in the body too. These types are called **non-gastric MALT lymphoma**.

**Splenic MZL** is a rarer form of MZL. It mainly affects the spleen. The spleen is part of the lymphatic system and is located on the left side of the abdomen, under your ribcage.

**Nodal MZL** is also a rare form of MZL. This type generally develops in the lymph nodes.

# Marginal Zone Lymphoma... *contd*

## How will MZL affect me?

How MZL affects you depends on which type of MZL you have and where in your body it develops. What symptoms you personally experience is also very individual. You may have:

- **Gastric MALT:** stomach pain, nausea, indigestion.
- **Non-gastric MALT:** what symptoms you have depends on where in your body the lymphoma is.
- **Splenic:** enlarged spleen, fatigue caused by anemia. Anemia is a low level of red blood cells.
- **Nodal:** painless swellings of lymph nodes, fatigue caused by anemia.

Some people with MZL have '**B symptoms**': night sweats, unintended weight loss, and fevers.

## What is the treatment for MZL?

For most patients, the aim of treatment is to achieve a partial or complete response, where the signs of lymphoma are reduced or disappear. This state is called **remission**.

For gastric MALT lymphoma you will likely receive antibiotics.

Otherwise, treatment for MZL is generally:

- **radiotherapy**
- **immunotherapy**
- **chemotherapy**.

Most people will receive a combination of chemotherapy and immunotherapy. This is called **chemoimmunotherapy**.

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

Immunotherapy includes treatments such as 'targeted therapies'. They generally work by 'targeting' the proteins that cause cancer cells to grow and divide. There are different kinds of targeted therapies, including small molecule inhibitors such as **BTK inhibitors**.

## After diagnosis: what next?

When you receive a diagnosis of MZL 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 healthcare team may decide to begin treatment or you may be one of the many people with MZL 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 the lymphoma is developing. Treatment may become necessary. If so, your doctor will discuss your options.

## 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 a specialist team of 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 MZL or to the hematology department in your local hospital.

## More help and information

Lymphoma Action UK  
lymphoma-action.org.uk

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society  
lls.org

Leukaemia Foundation  
leukaemia.org.au

Blood Cancer UK  
bloodcancer.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support  
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HEALTHCARE

## Marginal Zone Lymphoma... contd

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[lls.org](http://lls.org)  
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HEALTHCARE

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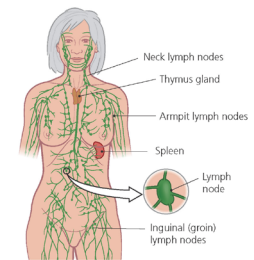
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MZL: **MALT lymphoma**, **splenic MZL**, and **nodal MZL**. MALT lymphoma is divided into **gastric MALT** and **non-gastric MALT**.

Sometimes possible. However, MZL have a life.

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Patient Information Forum

