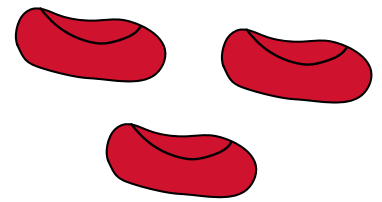


Autoimmune haemolytic anaemia (AIHA)

AIHA is a complication of CLL. It happens when your immune system attacks your red blood cells. It causes low levels of red blood cells, which can show up on your routine blood tests.

It's called secondary AIHA when you have CLL because it follows on from your disease. It's most likely to develop when you have advanced-stage CLL, but it can happen at any stage. For some people, AIHA can be the first sign that they have CLL.



Red blood cells

Up to 10 in 100 people with CLL develop AIHA. More than 90 in 100 do not.

There are two main types of AIHA:

- Warm AIHA, when antibodies that work best at body temperature attack your red blood cells
- Cold AIHA, when antibodies that work best at a cold temperature attack your red blood cells

Symptoms of AIHA

Both types of AIHA can cause symptoms resulting from the breakdown and loss of red blood cells. These include:



Tiredness and lack of energy



Dizziness



Breathlessness



Yellowing of the whites of your eyes



Darker pee than usual

It can also cause yellowing of your skin, but this may be less noticeable if you have brown or black skin.

Cold-type AIHA can also cause symptoms triggered by cold temperatures. These include:

- A white or paler colour on the skin of your fingertips or toes
- Pain, numbness, or pins and needles in your fingers or toes

The tips of your nose and ears may also turn a pale or dusky blue colour. This may be harder to see on black or brown skin.

Contact your haematology team if you're worried about any symptoms you have.

Diagnosis and treatment for AIHA

You'll need blood tests to diagnose AIHA.

There are lots of treatment options for AIHA. Your treatment plan will depend on your symptoms, CLL stage, and general health. Treatments for AIHA can take several weeks to work. They may include:

- Steroids
- A targeted medicine called rituximab
- Other targeted medicines used to treat CLL or other blood cancers
- Blood transfusions to help ease your symptoms



Your haematology specialist is best placed to talk to you about your treatment options and outlook.

This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice or guidance from your health professional.

For [more information about CLL](#), follow the link. Or search 'CLL' at www.leukaemiacare.org.uk or scan the QR code. This also includes links to order free information in print.



Need help? We offer a range of [support services](#). To find out more, scan the QR code, click the link or search 'support for you' at leukaemiacare.org.uk



Want to talk about CLL?

Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444** (weekdays 9am to 4.30pm)

Send a WhatsApp to **07500 068065** (weekdays 9am to 5pm)

Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk

Email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk

If you'd like to comment on our content or have a list of the sources we used for this factsheet, please get in touch. Email information@leukaemiacare.org.uk or call **08088 010 444**. Or complete our [short survey](#).



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