



**Blood tests:** These measure your blood cell counts, look for abnormal cells and check your general health. You might have a few before you're diagnosed.



**Bone marrow tests:** You have medicine to numb your skin. Then a doctor uses a special needle to take a sample of spongy bone marrow, usually from the back of your pelvis.



**X-rays or scans:** You might have scans, depending on your symptoms.



**Other tests:** These might involve a heart tracing, taking a sample of fluid from your spine, or taking a sample of a lymph node.



You might stay in hospital to have your tests. Or you might go home in between.



**Diagnosis:** Your doctor or nurse should explain your test results.



Many people turn out **not** to have leukaemia.

### Leukaemia

You are not alone. Around 28 people in the UK find out they have leukaemia every day.

- It is not because of anything you did or did not do.
- You cannot catch it or give it to other people.
- You are not alone.



### Not leukaemia

Symptoms and signs are similar in other conditions, like infections, low vitamin levels, autoimmune conditions or other types of blood cancer. If you do not have leukaemia, your doctor will explain the next steps.

### Chronic leukaemia usually grows slowly.

It is more common than acute leukaemia.

There are two main types:

- Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL)
- Chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML)

There are other, rarer types too.

About CLL:



About CML:



Other types:



There are many types of leukaemia. Your doctor uses your test results to find out what type you have. This helps them work out the right treatment for you.

### Acute leukaemia usually grows quickly.

There are two main types:

- Acute myeloid leukaemia (AML)
- Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL)

There are other, rarer types too.

About ALL:



About AML:



Other types:



Treatment is tailored to you. Your doctor will tell you what they recommend. You'll also have medicines to help with symptoms and side effects.

Some treatments can affect fertility. If this is a concern for you, talk to your doctor or nurse about your options.



You may not need treatment straight away. Having treatment before you need it does not improve your outcome and could cause side effects.



If you need it, you usually have treatment at home.



Treatment aims to keep the leukaemia under control.



You might carry on taking your treatment long-term. Or you might be able to stop treatment.



You usually have targeted medicines. Most of these are tablets you take by mouth.



People with leukaemia are vulnerable to infections. Your doctor or nurse will explain simple things you can do to lower your risk.



You start treatment straight away.



You usually stay in hospital to have treatment at first.



Treatment usually aims to cure the leukaemia.



You have treatment in phases, with different medicines in each phase.



Your first treatment is usually chemotherapy, sometimes with targeted medicines too.



You'll have tests and check-ups to see how your leukaemia is responding and how you are coping with treatment.

# About leukaemia



This leaflet gives a simple overview of leukaemia. It covers what it is, how it's diagnosed and what might happen next. It's for you if:



You're having tests for leukaemia



You've just been diagnosed with leukaemia



You know someone with leukaemia

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 from your health professional.

This leaflet includes QR codes and links to further information and support. If you cannot access these, please email [information@leukaemiacare.org.uk](mailto:information@leukaemiacare.org.uk) or call **08088 010 444**.

# What is leukaemia?

Leukaemia is a type of blood cancer. It develops when abnormal white blood cells grow out of control. They build up in your body and make it hard for you to make enough healthy blood cells.

## Why does my doctor think I have it?

Your doctor might have noticed an unusual result on a blood test. Or you might have concerning symptoms, like:



Feeling exhausted or worn out, even after resting



Bruising or bleeding easily, or bruises that take a long time to heal



Infections that last a long time or keep coming back



Fever for no obvious reason, or sweating a lot at night



Feeling breathless



Joint or bone pain



A rash of tiny red, purple or darker dots under your skin (this may be harder to see on black or brown skin)



Swollen lymph nodes that don't go down in a few weeks



Tummy pain, bloating or feeling full quickly after eating



Losing weight without trying to

Some people with leukaemia do not have any symptoms.

# Getting support

Having tests, waiting for results and getting a diagnosis can be hard. You probably have questions and aren't sure where to turn.

We're here to support you, whether you're affected yourself or know someone who is. Here are some ways we can help.



Freephone helpline for advice, support or a listening ear



Support groups, buddy support and Facebook groups to help you connect with others in a similar situation



Advice on money, benefits, housing and employment issues



Access to financial support and counselling

Scan this QR code or use the contact details on the back cover to get in touch.



Scan this QR code for a simple explanation of medical words you might read or hear.

### Other helpful charities include:

Blood Cancer UK [bloodcancer.org.uk](http://bloodcancer.org.uk) 0808 2080 888

Leukaemia UK [leukaemiauk.org.uk](http://leukaemiauk.org.uk)

CLL Support [cllsupport.org.uk](http://cllsupport.org.uk) 0800 977 4396

CML Support [cmlsupport.org.uk](http://cmlsupport.org.uk)

Cancer Research UK [cancerresearchuk.org](http://cancerresearchuk.org) 0808 800 4040

Macmillan [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk) 0808 808 00 00

Maggie's [maggies.org](http://maggies.org)

Teenage Cancer Trust [teenagecancertrust.org](http://teenagecancertrust.org)

Young Lives vs Cancer [younglivesvscancer.org.uk](http://younglivesvscancer.org.uk)

Carers UK [carersuk.org](http://carersuk.org)

(for family members and friends)





Every day, 28 people in the UK find out they have leukaemia. In that moment, and every moment after, we're here.

At Leukaemia Care, we support anyone affected by leukaemia because leukaemia can affect anyone. Whether you're living with it, loving someone through it, or coping with the impact of it, you're not alone.

- Call our freephone helpline: **08088 010 444**
- Message us on WhatsApp: **07500 068065**
- Visit: **[leukaemicare.org.uk](https://leukaemicare.org.uk)**
- Email: **[support@leukaemicare.org.uk](mailto:support@leukaemicare.org.uk)**

If you have any feedback or you'd like a list of the sources we used for this leaflet, please get in touch. Email **[information@leukaemicare.org.uk](mailto:information@leukaemicare.org.uk)** or call **08088 010 444**. Or scan the QR code to complete a short survey about our information.



Leukaemia Care, One Birch Court,  
Blackpole East, Worcester, WR3 8SG



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