Understanding Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL)

What is CLL?

Leukemia is a type of cancer found in the blood and bone marrow and is caused by the rapid production of abnormal white blood cells.¹

In CLL, cancerous cells crowd the blood and bone marrow leaving less room for healthy white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets. This can lead to infection, anemia and bleeding.²

Compared to CLL, where most cancer cells are found in the blood and bone marrow, small lymphocytic lymphoma (SLL) cancer cells are mostly concentrated in the lymph nodes.³

The majority of CLL patients have multiple concurrent health conditions (eg, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes), though disease progression and CLL-related complications including infections and second cancers are the primary causes of death.⁴

There are two different types of CLL. The slower-growing type can remain stable for years and may not require immediate treatment. The faster-growing type is more aggressive and may need to be treated quickly.⁵

CLL Fast Facts

- **CLL is the most common type of leukemia** in adults, with an estimated 21,250 new cases in the US in 2021.⁶,⁷
- **Men are nearly twice as likely to have CLL than women.**⁸
- **The average age at time of diagnosis is approximately 70 years.**⁹
- **Many patients do not have any symptoms upon diagnosis.** CLL is often found in blood tests for unrelated health problems or during a routine check-up.¹⁰
- **Though the survival rate for patients varies based on the stage of the disease at diagnosis, the 5-year survival rate for CLL patients is 87%.**⁹,¹¹

Common Symptoms*

Generally, CLL symptoms develop over time. As the disease progresses, a person may experience¹⁰,¹²:

- Fever and night sweats
- Weakness and fatigue
- Infections (skin, lungs, kidneys or other sites)
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Stomach pain
- Weight loss

*Symptoms are non-specific and could arise from other less serious conditions.

References