

Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia

What is Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia?

Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL) is the most common type of leukaemia to affect adultsⁱ, accounting for approximately 25-30% of all leukaemias.ⁱⁱ The overall incidence of CLL is around 3 per 100,000 and is twice as common in men as in women.ⁱⁱⁱ

CLL is perceived as an indolent disease – meaning that it is slow to progress - and mainly affects the elderly with 70-80% of patients diagnosed after the age of 55 and the median age for diagnosis believed to be approximately between 65 and 70 years of age.³

The causes

The causes of CLL are largely unknown. However, research has focused on some factors that may contribute to the development of malignancies, including genetic factors, impaired immune system and viruses. Scientists have established that CLL occurs in males more often than females and in white populations more often than Asian populations but the precise cause for this cannot be explained.³ Some families are more likely to have cases of CLL without having a defined genetic alteration.

The symptoms

CLL is a dormant disease and is often diagnosed coincidentally. For this reason approximately 40-60% of patients with CLL are asymptomatic at the time of diagnosis – meaning that they display no symptoms of the disease.³

For those patients displaying symptoms^{iv}, these can be as follows:

- Enlarged painless nodes in the neck, armpits, abdomen and groin
- Recurrent infections, which are related to the poorly functioning immune system
- Weight loss
- Fevers

References

- ⁱ <http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk/Cancertype/Leukaemiachroniclymphocytic/General/WhatisCLL>
- ⁱⁱ <http://cl.acor.org/clfaq/answers/5.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.lrf.org.uk/media/images/CLL07_4693.pdf
- ^{iv} <http://cl.acor.org/clfaq/answers/11.html>
- ^v <http://cl.acor.org/clfaq/answers/34.html>
- ^{vi} <http://cl.acor.org/clfaq/answers/36.html>