



Angioimmunoblastic
T-cell Lymphoma
AITL



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one has been diagnosed with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma (AITL). What does it mean and how will it affect you?

This fact sheet will help you:

Learn about AITL
and how it is
diagnosed

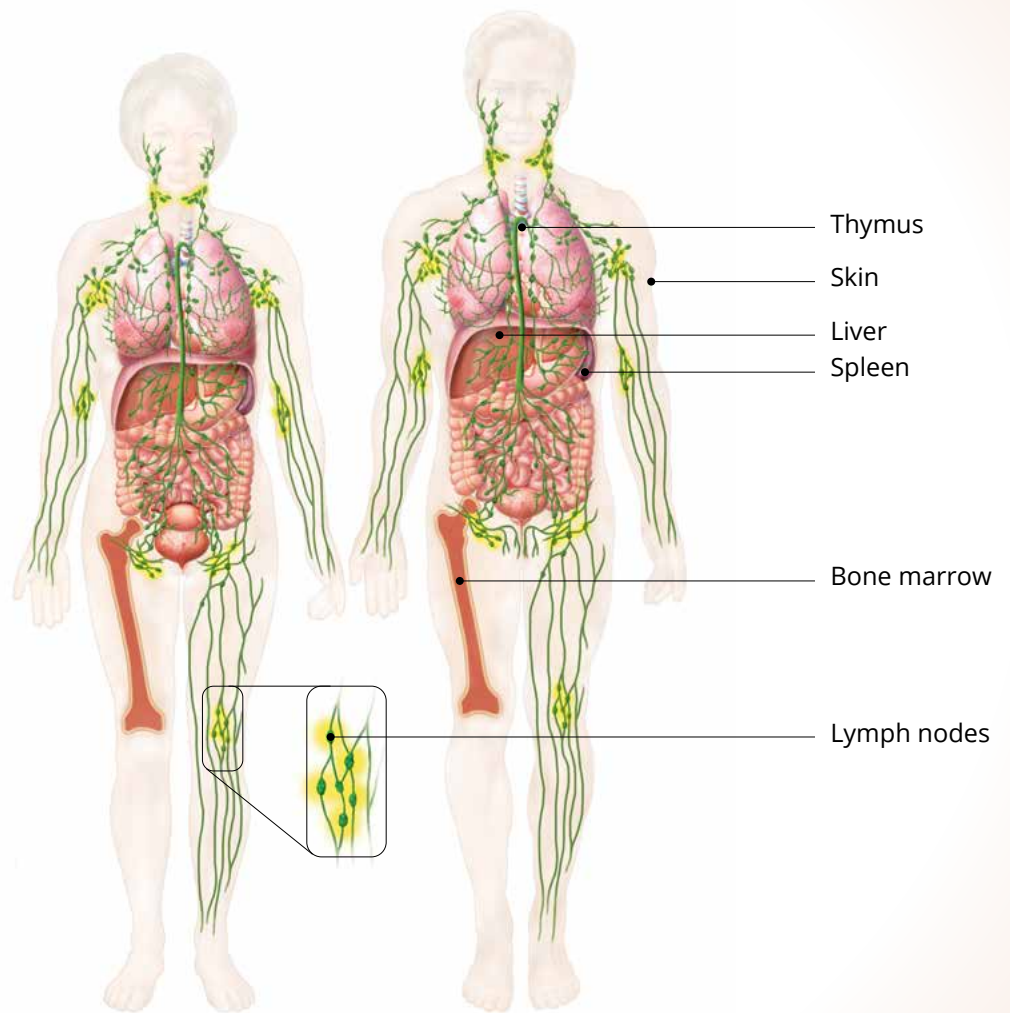
Get an overview
of treatment
options

Understand what
happens next

About lymphoma

Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system, which includes the bone marrow, lymph nodes, thymus, liver, skin, and spleen.

Your lymphatic system defends your body against infection by creating white blood cells called **lymphocytes**. If these cells become abnormal, you may develop lymphoma.



What is lymphoma?

Lymphoma is the name of a group of blood cancers that develop in your lymphatic system. The two main types are Hodgkin lymphoma (HL) and non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL). Angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma (AITL) is a subtype of NHL.

About AITL

- AITL is a rare, fast-growing (aggressive) T-cell subtype of NHL and a common subtype of peripheral T-cell lymphoma (PTCL)
- It involves white blood cells (lymphocytes) called T-cells
- Blood vessels (angio) often have an abnormal pattern
- The spleen, bone marrow, liver, and lymph nodes are often involved
- It typically affects adults over age 50 and is slightly more common in men
- AITL can cause immune system problems

Symptoms of AITL

AITL symptoms are often similar to symptoms of autoimmune disorders.

You may experience:

- Painless swelling in your neck, armpits, or groin
 - When your lymph nodes are enlarged or swollen
- Feeling bloated or full
 - When your spleen or liver is enlarged
- Skin rash
 - A response to your immune system
- Weight loss
 - When you are eating less or using more energy
- Fever and drenching night sweats
 - Possibly a response from your immune system

Your diagnosis

With a diagnosis, your doctor can determine the right treatment for you. Your test results help your doctor predict how AITL will likely progress and how you may respond to treatment.

Here are some possible tests you may undergo:

Name of test	Description
Medical history and physical exam	The doctor will review past illnesses, injuries, and symptoms and will examine your lungs, heart, and other organs.
Blood tests	Blood tests help determine the need for treatment and the extent of the disease. They also help identify the NHL subtype.
Bone marrow biopsy	This test confirms whether the lymphoma has spread to the bone marrow. This will help your doctor determine the benefits of specific therapies.
Imaging tests	<p>A computed tomography (CT) scan uses a computer linked to an X-ray machine to make a series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body.</p> <p>Positron emission tomography (PET) uses radioactive material to create a 3D image of the body. It can identify whether lymphoma cells are in the bone marrow and other parts of the body.</p> <p>Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) uses magnetic fields and radio waves to create images of the body's organs, including the brain and tissues.</p>
Ultrasound	This test uses high-frequency sound waves to create pictures of internal organs, tissues, and blood flow.

Name of test	Description
Lymph node biopsy	In this test, a sample of the tumour or lymph node is used to look at the size, shape, and arrangement of the lymphoma cells.
Immunophenotyping	This test helps find specific types of cells within a blood sample to confirm a diagnosis. It identifies the lymphoma cells as B cells, T cells, or natural killer cells.

Stages of AITL

Identifying the stage of the disease is an important step in planning your treatment. The stage of lymphoma refers to where your disease is located and how much of it is in your body.

Your doctor will determine the stage of your disease using imaging, lab tests, and a physical exam to:

- Figure out your lymphoma subtype, such as AITL
- Monitor how it progresses

Stages I and II (1 and 2) are early stages. Stages III and IV (3 and 4) are advanced. Many people with AITL are diagnosed at an advanced stage.

Stages

Stage I	The lymphoma is in one group of lymph nodes or one extranodal site (outside the lymph nodes)
Stage II	The lymphoma is in two or more groups of lymph nodes on the same side of your diaphragm
Stage III	The lymphoma is in lymph nodes above and below the diaphragm
Stage IV	The lymphoma is found in many areas of the body (in the lymph nodes and beyond)

AITL treatment

New treatment approaches will help manage your AITL symptoms and complications, including infections and fatigue. The types of treatment can vary widely and could include clinical trials.

You may experience mild to severe side effects during treatment, depending on your age, overall health, and treatment plan. If so, let your doctor know.

Side effects can affect people in different ways. Most side effects improve or go away after treatment ends. New drugs and therapies can help control most side effects.



Types of treatment

Clinical trials are research studies that aim to improve the care and treatment of people living with cancer.

For some people with a blood cancer, a clinical trial may be the best treatment choice. Talk to your healthcare team for more information.

Common AITL treatments and possible side effects include:

- **Chemotherapy** uses medicine to kill cancer cells. It is often given in combination with immunotherapy.
 - **Potential side effects:** low blood cell counts (white, red, and platelets), infection, bleeding, anemia, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, brain fog (chemo brain), fatigue, shortness of breath, diseases or disorders affecting the heart (cardiopathy), temporary hair loss, mouth sores, rashes, secondary cancers, and neuropathy
- **Radiation therapy** uses high-energy X-rays or other types of radiation to kill cancer cells. It may be combined with other treatments, such as chemotherapy.
 - **Potential side effects:** redness, dryness, itching, blistering, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, headaches, swelling, fatigue, shortness of breath, cardiopathy, temporary hair loss, and secondary cancers
- **Immunotherapy** uses an intravenous drug that can either boost or pause your immune system to help your body fight cancer. Immunotherapy is done in addition to chemotherapy. It is only available in Canada through a clinical trial.
 - **Potential side effects:** rashes, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and decreased thyroid hormone levels
- **Targeted therapies** are a type of drug therapy that targets specific substances on cancer cells. These drugs are often given in pill form and may be useful when the disease has relapsed after other treatments. Targeted therapies are only available in Canada through a clinical trial.
 - **Potential side effects:** low blood cell counts (white, red, and platelets), infection, bleeding, anemia, skin problems, high blood pressure, fatigue, diarrhea, neuropathy, and slower healing time for wounds
- A **stem cell transplant (SCT)** gives you healthy stem cells to replace those damaged by cancer or intense chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Your body relies on stem cells to produce blood cells.

There are two main types of SCT used to treat blood cancers:

- **Autologous:** The stem cells come from your body. This allows you to receive high doses of chemotherapy (sometimes with radiation). By using your own stem cells, it helps your bone marrow produce new blood cells and reset your immune system.
- **Allogeneic:** The stem cells come from a donor. These donor cells replace the damaged ones in your bone marrow, potentially offering a long-term cure.
 - **Potential side effects:** low white blood cell count (increased risk of infection), low platelet count (increased risk of bleeding or bruising), low red blood cell count (causes fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, and feeling unwell), pain and issues with your digestive system, skin and hair problems, issues with your organs or central nervous system, and possible graft-versus-host disease (GvHD) or veno-occlusive disease (affecting the small vessels leading to your liver)

Factors that affect treatment

Discuss your treatment options with your doctor to make sure you understand the benefits and risks of each approach. Your treatment plan is based on:

- Your age and overall health
- Your symptoms and blood counts
- The stage of AITL
- Disease status (first diagnosis or relapse, which is when the cancer returns after initial treatment)
- Any other medical problems you may have
- Your lifestyle and preferences

Long-term or late effects of treatment

Medical follow-up is important after treatment for AITL. You may need blood tests, bone marrow tests, or imaging tests to determine if you need further treatment. Your medical team will provide a care plan listing follow-up visits and the tests you will have at those visits.

You may experience long-term or late effects of your treatment:

- **Long-term side effects** can last for months or years after treatment ends. Examples include fatigue, fertility issues (the ability to conceive and have children), secondary cancers, and neuropathy.
- **Late effects** are medical problems that do not show up until years after treatment ends. See your doctor to get follow-up care for possible early detection of heart disease, secondary cancers, fertility issues, thyroid problems, trouble concentrating, or chronic fatigue.



Living with AITL can be overwhelming. Seek medical help if you feel “down” or “blue” or don’t want to do anything and your mood does not improve over time. These could be signs of depression, an illness that should be treated even when you’re undergoing treatment for AITL. Treatment for depression has important benefits for people living with cancer. Remember, you are not alone.

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