

Leukaemia

What is leukaemia?



Leukaemia is a type of **blood cancer** that affects the production of **white blood cells** in the bone marrow.¹

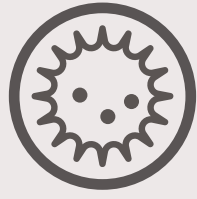
There are different types of leukaemia which depend on the type of blood cell affected and how the condition develops.¹

There are two types of **myeloid leukaemia**²:

- **Acute myeloid leukaemia (AML)** develops quickly, and starts from young white blood cells, called **granulocytes** or **monocytes**, in the bone marrow
- **Chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML)** starts in **granulocytes** and often develops slowly. Treatment can keep it under control for many years

There are two types of **lymphoblastic leukaemia**²:

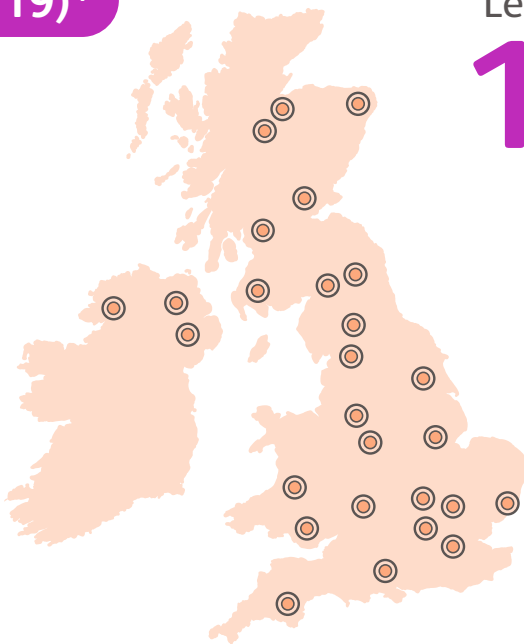
- **Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL)** develops quickly and starts in white blood cells called lymphocytes³
- **Chronic lymphoblastic leukaemia (CLL)** develops slowly, progresses over time and starts in lymphocytes²



Hairy cell leukaemia (HCL) is a rare type of chronic leukaemia which develops slowly from white blood cells called **B lymphocytes**.²

UK prevalence (2017 - 2019)⁴

In total, there are around
10,300
new leukaemia cases
every year which is equivalent to
28 every day



Leukaemia is the **12th** **most common cancer** in the UK

Incidence rates for leukaemia in the UK are highest in people aged
85 to 89

Risk factors

Risk factors vary dependent on **type of the leukaemia** but can include⁵⁻⁹:



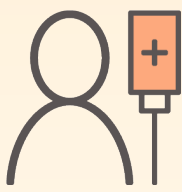
Age



Sex



Ethnicity



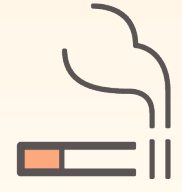
Past chemotherapy



Autoimmune conditions



Genetic disorders



Lifestyle e.g., smoking or being overweight or obese



Family history of leukaemia



Exposure to radiation

Signs and symptoms

Leukaemia symptoms vary depending on the type of leukaemia. The **most common symptoms** include¹:



Fatigue



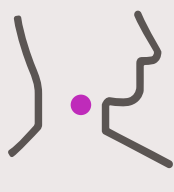
Bruising and bleeding easily



Repeated infections



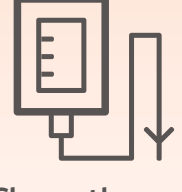
Unexplained weight loss



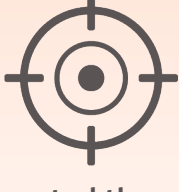
Swollen lymph nodes/glands

Treatment options

Leukaemia treatments vary depending on the **type of leukaemia**, as well as other factors. Treatments include¹:



Chemotherapy



Targeted therapy



Stem cell transplant

References:

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4. Cancer Research UK. Leukaemia statistics. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/leukaemia> Last accessed: March 2025
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8. Cancer Research UK. Risk factors for CLL. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/chronic-lymphocytic-leukaemia-ctl/risks-causes> Last accessed: March 2025
9. Cancer Research UK. Risk factors for hairy cell leukaemia. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/hairy-cell-leukaemia/risks-causes> Last accessed: March 2025