A CLL EMPOWERMENT GUIDE

Newly diagnosed with CLL

CLL empowerment

For most people, receiving a diagnosis of Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL) can be upsetting. For some, this diagnosis could even have came about without any early symptoms or warning. It is important to take time and process what is happening at your own pace.

Breaking this diagnosis into its parts can help you understand it better.

Specifically, **"Chronic"** helps set CLL apart from acute types of leukemias. It means that your journey with CLL, including its development, monitoring and treatment, will take place across a long period of time. This usually results in less intense treatments compared to the acute leukemias. CLL is a marathon, not a sprint.

"Lymphocytic" refers to the cells that are impacted. In CLL, cells known as B Lymphocytes can get out of balance (see "CLL diagnosis" leaflet).

Lastly, **"Leukemia"** refers to the broad family of diseases that CLL is a part of, namely blood cancers. CLL is a blood cancer affecting the lymphocytes in the body and needs long-term monitoring. It is a disease that, with time, people learn to live with.

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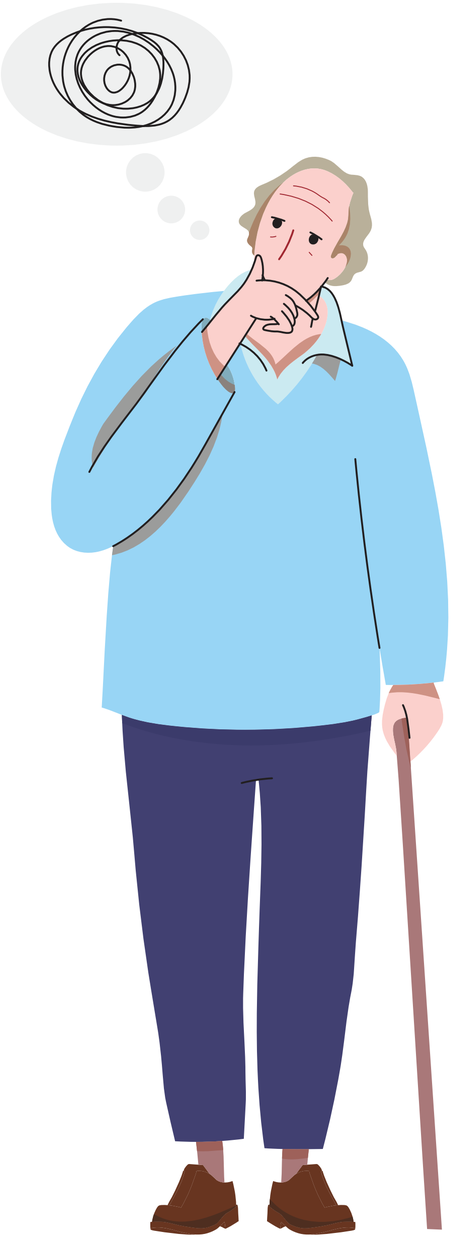
Upon hearing the diagnosis, everyone can have a different reaction and expresses their feelings in their own way. **There is no right or wrong reaction, and it may change with time.**

For example, receiving a CLL diagnosis can be overwhelming for some. During this time, you might be feeling shock, anger, disbelief, or even nothing at all. Furthermore, you may want to be with people or by yourself. You may want to stay at home or go out and so on. All of these are normal. Such initial reactions are known as "having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation". Give yourself time, do what feels right to you, and be kind to yourself when you are experiencing them.



Nevertheless, if finding your new footing takes more time that you would expect or if your daily life is notably affected, you can consult with a mental health professional to support you (see "Coping with challenging emotions" leaflet).

Furthermore, it is normal to ask your physician about things you have heard about cancer or leukemias and to clarify their accuracy. They are an ally who can answer any of your questions and ease your worries and fears. They may also offer you information from credible sources that can help you.

Your physician may recommend not to start treatment right away. This may come as a surprise, but many people with CLL are on active monitoring called "Watch & wait" (see "Watch & wait" leaflet). For some, this can be the best course of action. When focusing on what might come next, you may neglect the present. **Eating, drinking water, sleeping, personal hygiene,** can all be very important during this time, so try not to forget about them (see "Complementary care and lifestyle modifications in CLL" leaflet).

Overall, CLL is different for everyone and things may not be exactly the same as they used to be.

Nevertheless, with time, you can go back to living a good life or even a great one

designed by —— BOS

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CLL empowerment