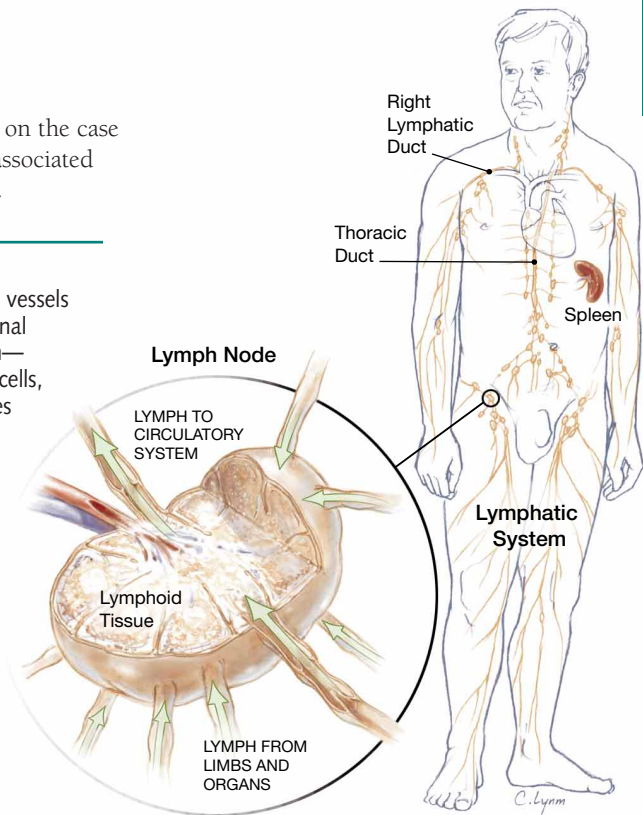


Lymphoma

An article in the April 11, 2001, issue of *JAMA* reports on the case of a 47-year-old man with non-Hodgkin lymphoma associated with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

WHAT IS THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM?

The **lymphatic system** includes an extensive network of lymphatic vessels and **lymph nodes**, and lymphoid tissue in the **spleen**, gastrointestinal tract, tonsils, and adenoids. The lymphatic vessels transport **lymph**—excess fluid from body tissues that also contains protein, immune cells, and waste products. As the lymph passes through the lymph nodes and spleen, old blood cells, organisms that may cause disease, and foreign substances are filtered out. Lymph is then returned to the circulatory system via the **right lymphatic duct** and the **thoracic duct**.



WHAT IS LYMPHOMA?

Lymphoma is a cancer that originates in the lymphoid tissue when lymphocytes, a type of immune cell, become malignant and multiply, crowding out normal cells. Lymphomas are classified as either **Hodgkin disease** or **non-Hodgkin lymphoma**. One way the 2 types of lymphoma are distinguished is by viewing the diseased cells under a microscope. The abnormal cells found in Hodgkin disease (**Reed-Sternberg cells**) are distinct from those found in the tissue of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

SYMPTOMS OF NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA

The most common symptom of non-Hodgkin lymphoma is painless swelling of the lymph nodes in the neck, underarm, or groin.

Other symptoms may include

- Unexplained fever
- Unexplained weight loss
- Night sweats
- Itchy skin
- Constant fatigue
- Reddened patches on the skin

All of the above symptoms can be caused by other conditions or diseases. If you are experiencing these symptoms, be sure to see your doctor so that he or she can give you a proper diagnosis.

RISK FACTORS FOR NON-HODGKIN LYMPHOMA

- Sex—men are more likely than women to develop non-Hodgkin lymphoma
- Older age
- Environmental factors—exposure to certain chemicals, including some pesticides, solvents, or fertilizers
- Weakened immune system—reduced immunity resulting from conditions such as HIV infection or from immunosuppressant drugs for organ transplants

Sources: National Cancer Institute, American Society of Clinical Oncology, American Cancer Society, The AMA Home Medical Library, The AMA Family Medical Guide, The AMA Encyclopedia of Medicine

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service
800/4-CANCER
800/332-8615 (TTY)
www.cancer.net
- American Society of Clinical Oncology
1900 Duke St, Suite 200
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/299-0150
www.asco.org
- American Cancer Society
800/ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

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