

# Hodgkin's disease

## About Hodgkin's disease

Hodgkin's disease is a type of lymphoma, a general term for a cancer that begins in lymph tissue.

In Hodgkin's disease, lymphocytes become damaged. They grow and multiply uncontrollably so that the Lymph nodes become enlarged, forming painless lumps called tumours. As damaged lymphocytes replace normal lymphocytes, the immune system becomes less able to fight infection.

Hodgkin's disease may occur in a single lymph node, a group of lymph nodes, or in another organ. Sometimes, Hodgkin's disease can appear at the same time in several parts of the body. This type of cancer can spread to almost any part of the body, including the liver, spleen and bone marrow.

## Types of lymphoma

There are two types of lymphoma - Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Hodgkin is the name of the doctor who, in 1832, first recognised the disease we call lymphoma.

Of all lymphomas, only 15% are Hodgkin's disease.

The difference between Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is a type of cancer cell. In Hodgkin's disease, tumours contain large cells called Reed-Sternberg cells. These cells are not found in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

## What causes Hodgkin's disease?

The cause of Hodgkin's disease is not known.

Researchers think factors from a person's genes and from their environment combine to cause Hodgkin's disease.

The disease does not run in families and cannot be passed from one person to another.

## How common is it?

About 10 people in Tasmania are diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease every year.

It usually develops in people between the ages of 20 and 30 and over 60.

For more detailed information consult the booklet *Understanding Hodgkin's disease* on [www.cancertas.org.au/pages/healthprof\\_patient.php](http://www.cancertas.org.au/pages/healthprof_patient.php)

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