

## Maintenance Therapy in Lymphoma

### Overview

*Maintenance therapy* refers to the ongoing treatment of patients whose disease has responded well to *frontline* or *firstline* (initial) treatment. More and more cancer treatments have emerged that are effective at helping to place the cancer into *remission* (disappearance of signs and symptoms of lymphoma). Maintenance regimens are used to keep the cancer in remission.

Maintenance therapy typically consists of nonchemotherapy drugs given at lower doses and longer intervals than those used during *induction therapy* (initial treatment). Depending on the type of lymphoma and the medications used, maintenance therapy may last for weeks, months, or even years. Brentuximab vedotin (Adcetris), lenalidomide (Revlimid), and rituximab (Rituxan) are examples of treatments used as maintenance therapy in various lymphomas. As new effective treatments with limited toxicity are developed, more drugs are likely to be used as maintenance therapies.

Although the medications used for maintenance treatments generally have fewer side effects than chemotherapy, patients may still experience adverse events. Doctors consider all of a patient's clinical circumstances before determining the best induction therapy. After induction therapy is completed, the doctor then decides whether the patient would benefit from maintenance therapy, retreatment, or the *active surveillance* (also known as "watchful waiting" or "careful observation") approach. With the active surveillance strategy, patients' overall health and disease are monitored through regular checkups and various evaluating procedures, such as laboratory and imaging tests. Active treatment is started if the patient begins to develop lymphoma-related symptoms or there are signs that the disease is progressing based on testing performed during follow-up visits.

Maintenance therapy has traditionally been used for *indolent* (slow growing) non-Hodgkin lymphoma subtypes such as follicular lymphoma; however, researchers are currently studying the value of using maintenance therapies in many other subtypes of lymphoma.

Questions that patients can ask their oncologist to help them better understand the role of maintenance therapy in their treatment course include:

- Is maintenance therapy an option for me?
- Why are you recommending maintenance therapy?
- What are the benefits and risks?
- How often and for how long will I receive this treatment?

- What side effects might I experience? Are the side effects expected to increase as I continue on maintenance therapy?
- Does my insurance cover this treatment?
- Is maintenance therapy better for me than active surveillance followed by this same therapy if the lymphoma returns?
- Will the use of maintenance therapy have any impact on any future therapies I may need?

### Treatments Under Investigation

Many agents are being studied in clinical trials as maintenance therapy for different subtypes of lymphoma, either alone or as part of a combination therapy regimen, including:

- Bortezomib (Velcade)
- Ibrutinib (Imbruvica)
- Ixazomib (Ninlaro)
- Obinutuzumab (Gazyva)
- Ofatumumab (Arzerra)
- Panobinostat (Farydak)
- Resminostat
- Romidepsin (Istodax)
- Temozolomide (Temodar)
- Vorinostat (Zolinza)

It is critical to remember that today's scientific research is continuously evolving. Treatment options may change as new treatments are discovered and current treatments are improved. Therefore, it is important that patients check with the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) or with their physician for any treatment updates that may have recently emerged.

### Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are crucial in identifying effective drugs and determining optimal doses for patients with lymphoma. Patients interested in participating in a clinical trial should view the *Understanding Clinical Trials* fact sheet on LRF's website at [www.lymphoma.org/publications](http://www.lymphoma.org/publications), talk to their physician, or contact the LRF Helpline for an individualized clinical search by calling (800) 500-9976 or emailing [helpline@lymphoma.org](mailto:helpline@lymphoma.org).

## Follow-up

Patients with lymphoma should have regular visits with a physician who is familiar with their medical history and the treatments they have received. Medical tests (such as blood tests, computed tomography [CT] scans, and positron emission tomography [PET] scans) may be required at various times during remission to evaluate the need for additional treatment.

Some treatments can cause long-term side effects or late side effects, which can vary based on duration and frequency of treatments, age, gender, and the overall health of each patient at the time of treatment. A physician will check for these effects during follow-up care.

Patients and their caregivers are encouraged to keep copies of all medical records and test results as well as information on the types, amounts, and duration of all treatments received. This documentation will be important for keeping track of any side effects resulting from treatment or potential disease recurrences. LRF's award-winning *Focus On Lymphoma* mobile app ([www.FocusOnLymphoma.org](http://www.FocusOnLymphoma.org)) can help patients manage this documentation.

## Patient and Caregiver Support Services

A lymphoma diagnosis often triggers a range of feelings and concerns. In addition, cancer treatment can cause physical discomfort. One-to-one peer support programs, such as LRF's *Lymphoma Support Network*, connects patients and caregivers with volunteers who have experience with lymphoma or chronic lymphocytic leukemia/small lymphocytic lymphoma (CLL/SLL), similar treatments, or challenges, for mutual emotional support and encouragement. Patients and loved ones may find this information useful whether the patient is newly diagnosed, in treatment, or in remission.

### Patient Education

LRF offers a wide range of opportunities to learn about lymphoma.

*Ask the Doctor About Lymphoma* is a national series of two-hour, topic-specific, community-based programs that combine a presentation by a medical doctor with an extensive question-and-answer session.

*Lymphoma Workshops* are regional, full-day educational programs that provide the latest information about lymphoma, current treatment options, and patient support issues.

*The North American Educational Forum on Lymphoma* is held annually and provides critical information on treatment options, patient support issues, and the latest in lymphoma research.

*Webcasts* are available on specific types of lymphoma, treatment options, and support topics.

*Teleconferences* are hour-long, interactive telephone programs that provide an opportunity to learn more about lymphoma, treatments, and promising research from leading lymphoma experts.

### Patient Services and Support

The LRF Helpline staff members are available to answer your general questions about a lymphoma or CLL/SLL diagnosis and treatment information, as well as provide individual support and referrals to you and your loved ones. Callers may request the services of a language interpreter.

### Patient Publications

LRF offers a series of print and digital patient education publications. LRF offers comprehensive guides on non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), Hodgkin lymphoma (HL), CLL/SLL, and the transplantation process in lymphoma, along with a variety of disease- and topic-specific fact sheets. Contact the LRF Helpline at (800) 500-9976 or visit our website at [www.lymphoma.org/publications](http://www.lymphoma.org/publications).

### Mobile App

*Focus On Lymphoma* is the first mobile application (app) that provides patients and caregivers comprehensive content based on their lymphoma subtype and tools to help manage their disease such as, keep track of medications and blood work, track symptoms, and document treatment side effects. The *Focus On Lymphoma* mobile app is available for free download for iOS and Android devices in the Apple App Store and Google Play. For additional information on the mobile app, visit [www.FocusOnLymphoma.org](http://www.FocusOnLymphoma.org).

To learn more about any of these resources, visit our website at [www.lymphoma.org](http://www.lymphoma.org), or contact the LRF Helpline at (800) 500-9976 or [helpline@lymphoma.org](mailto:helpline@lymphoma.org).

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Supported  
through  
grants from:



Genentech  
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