

# Maintenance Therapy in Lymphoma

*Maintenance therapy refers to the ongoing treatment of patients whose disease has responded well to frontline or first-line (initial) treatment. Maintenance therapy is used to keep the cancer in remission (disappearance of signs and symptoms), by removing any lymphoma cells that are not detected in routine tests after frontline treatment.*

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. The monoclonal antibody (a protein made in the laboratory that binds to cancer cells and helps the immune system destroy them) rituximab (Rituxan) is commonly used as maintenance therapy in lymphoma. It can be given intravenously (infused directly into a vein) or by subcutaneous (under the skin; Rituxan Hycela) injection. 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 the patient's clinical condition 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, that may include laboratory tests (like a complete blood cell count), physical examinations (like checking for any swelling), and imaging (such as a computed tomography [CT] or positron emission tomography [PET] scan). 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.

For more information on maintenance therapy, please view the *Understanding Lymphoma and CLL Guide* on the Foundation's website (visit [lymphoma.org/publications](http://lymphoma.org/publications)).

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 doctor 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:

- Acalabrutinib (Calquence)
- Ibrutinib (Imbruvica)
- Lenalidomide (Revlimid)
- Obinutuzumab (Gazyva)
- Tislelizumab (Tevimbra)
- Zanubrutinib (Brukinsa)

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 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 the Foundation's website at [www.lymphoma.org/publications](http://www.lymphoma.org/publications), talk to their physician, or contact the Foundation's Helpline for an individualized clinical trial 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 their physician. During these visits, medical tests (such as blood tests and CT scans) may be recommended to evaluate the need for additional treatment.

Some treatments can cause long-term side effects (occur during treatment and continue for months or years) or late side effects (appear only months, years or decades after treatment has ended). These side effects can vary depending on the following factors:

- Duration of treatment (how long the treatment lasted).
- Frequency of treatment (how often was the treatment was administered).
- Type of treatment given.
- Age and gender of the patient.
- Patient overall health at the time of their treatment.

A physician and their care team will check for these side effects during follow-up care. Visits may become less frequent the longer the patient stays in remission.

Patients and their care partners are encouraged to keep copies of all medical records. This includes test results as well as information on the type, amount, and duration of all treatments

received. Medical records are important for keeping track of any side effects resulting from treatment or potential disease recurrences. The Foundation's award-winning Focus On Lymphoma mobile app can help patients manage this documentation.

## Lymphoma Care Plan

Keeping your information in one location can help you feel more organized and in control. This also makes it easier to find information pertaining to your care and saves valuable time. The Foundation's Lymphoma Care Plan document organizes information on your health care team, treatment regimen, and follow-up care. You can also keep track of health screenings and any symptoms you experience to discuss with your health care provider during future appointments. The Lymphoma Care Plan document can be accessed by visiting [lymphoma.org/publications](http://lymphoma.org/publications).

## Patient Education Programs

The Foundation also offers a variety of educational activities, including live meetings and webinars for individuals looking to learn directly from lymphoma experts. These programs provide the lymphoma community with important information about the diagnosis and treatment of lymphoma, as well as information about clinical trials, research advances and how to manage/cope with the disease. These programs are designed to meet the needs of a lymphoma patient from the point of diagnosis through long-term survivorship. To view our schedule of upcoming programs, please visit [lymphoma.org/programs](http://lymphoma.org/programs).

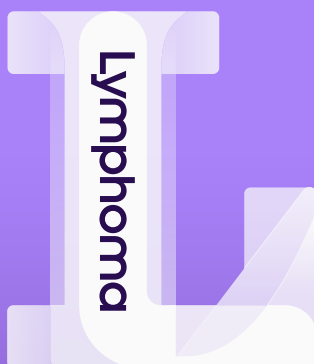
## Helpline

The Foundation's Helpline staff are available to answer your general questions about lymphoma 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. The Foundation also offers a one-to-one peer support program called the Lymphoma Support Network and clinical trials information through our Clinical Trials Information Service. For more information about any of these resources, visit our website at [lymphoma.org](http://lymphoma.org), or contact the Helpline at (800) 500-9976 or [helpline@lymphoma.org](mailto:helpline@lymphoma.org).

Para información en Español, por favor visite [lymphoma.org/es](http://lymphoma.org/es). (For Information in Spanish please visit [lymphoma.org/es](http://lymphoma.org/es)).

## Focus on Lymphoma Mobile App

Focus on Lymphoma is the first app to provide patients and their care partners with tailored content based on lymphoma subtype, and actionable tools to better manage diagnosis and treatment. Comprehensive lymphoma management, conveniently in one secure and easy-to-navigate app, no matter where you are on the care continuum. Get the right information, first, with resources from the entire Lymphoma Research Foundation content library, use unique tracking and reminder tools, and connect with a community of specialists and patients. To learn more about this resource, visit our website at [lymphoma.org/mobileapp](http://lymphoma.org/mobileapp), or contact the Foundation's Helpline at (800) 500-9976 or [helpline@lymphoma.org](mailto:helpline@lymphoma.org).



Research Foundation

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