What is acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL?)

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) is an acute leukaemia. Acute means that it develops very quickly. In ALL, white blood cells known as lymphocytes multiply in an uncontrolled manner in the bone marrow.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cpso07yF8qg&t=3s

Watch our animation with optional subtitles (translatable)

About ALL

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) is an acute leukaemia. Acute means that it develops very quickly. In ALL, white blood cells known as lymphocytes multiply in an uncontrolled manner in the bone marrow. Lymphocytes help the body fight infections as part of the immune system. Of the three types of lymphocytes that exist, only the B-cell and T-cell lymphocytes are involved in ALL. Natural killer cell (NK-cell) lymphocytes lead to a different type of leukaemia, not covered here.

In the United Kingdom (UK), the incidence of ALL (both B-cell and T-cell ALL) is 1.1 per 100,000 people per year. This means that around 800 people in the UK are given a diagnosis of ALL every year.

In adults with ALL:

- 75% of cases involve early immature B-cell lymphocytes (B-cells)
- 25% of cases involve early immature T-cell lymphocytes (T-cells)

We have more information about B-cell ALL and T-cell ALL, why they develop, and how they are diagnosed and treated.

Help us improve our information

We aim to provide information that's reliable, up-to-date, and covers what matters to you. Please complete our short survey to help us improve our information and make sure it meets your needs.

Leukaemia Care Registered Charity Number 1183890. Scotland Registered Charity Number SC049802
Helpline: 08088 010 444

Complete our short survey →

About our information

This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice from your health professional. Find out more about our information.

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