



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) is a type of white blood cell (WBC) cancer that is considered a slow-growing tumor. Asking the right questions during a conversation with your doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Bone Marrow	The deep center of bones is called the bone marrow, and this is where WBCs and RBCs are formed.
Leukemia	Overproduction of the cells that form in the bone marrow is called leukemia. Leukemia is a blood cancer, which differs from a solid tumor (solid tumors include cancers such as lung, brain, breast, and prostate cancer). Leukemia can spread to the whole body through the blood.
Lymphocyte	All WBCs are called leukocytes, which form in the bone marrow.
Lymphoma	A type of WBC cancer, lymphoma, develops in the lymph nodes. This type of cancer is often confused with leukemia. CLL is not lymphoma.
B-Cell	A B-cell is a type of lymphocyte that fights infections such as bacterial infections. CLL is characterized by an excessive number of dysfunctional B-cells.
Antibody	B-cells produce proteins called antibodies. These proteins target bacteria, attaching to them so they can be destroyed. With CLL, antibodies may be present, but they do not effectively fight infections as they normally would.
Lymphocytosis	An elevated concentration of lymphocytes in the blood is called lymphocytosis, and this can be among the first diagnostic signs of CLL.
Blood Smear	A sample of blood (obtained with an intravenous blood draw) can be examined under a microscope to obtain the count, concentration, and ratio of blood cells. A blood smear can also be used to examine the shape, size, and appearance of the blood cells.
Smudge Cell	A damaged WBC detected with a blood smear is called a smudge cell. These cells may be present in CLL.
Targeted Therapy	Therapy that is designed to target specific types of cancer cells is often described as targeted therapy. In general, targeted therapy has fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy.
Ibrutinib (Imbruvica)	This medication is approved for treatment of several types of cancer, including CLL, and is considered targeted therapy.

