

Cutaneous Lymphoma

Understanding Stage

Cutaneous lymphomas are cancers of lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell) that primarily involve the skin. They are sometimes called skin lymphomas, however cutaneous lymphomas are different from skin cancers, which develop from other non-lymphoid cells.

WHAT IS THE STAGE?

Like other lymphomas and cancers, the stage of a cutaneous lymphoma describes how far the cancer has grown. Along with the subtype and prognostic risk factors (e.g. age, overall health), the stage helps the healthcare team determine the best treatment approach.

HOW IS STAGE DETERMINED?

Staging is part of the diagnosis process, which also determines the subtype and grade of the lymphoma. A variety of tests, scans and examinations are performed, which can include:

- Full physical examination to assess the skin as well as feeling for enlarged lymph nodes
- Skin biopsies
- Blood tests
- CT scan and other imaging tests (these may not be done in early-stage disease)

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STAGES OF CUTANEOUS LYMPHOMA

Many types of cancer are staged using a stage 1, 2, 3, 4 system, but the categories described below are unique to cutaneous lymphomas.

TNMB

TNMB is an acronym for the way the cancer stage is described:

- **Tumour (T)** – how many areas of the skin are affected, rated between 1 and 3
- **Node (N)** – the number of nodes involved, rated between 0 and 3
- **Metastasis (M)** – if other body parts are involved, rated between 0 and 1
- **Blood (B)** – the extent the blood is affected (only used for mycosis fungoides and Sézary syndrome, rated between 0 and 2)

Mycosis fungoides & Sézary syndrome are then categorised under four progressive stages.

Stage 1

The lymphoma only affects the skin (patches or plaques). Stage 1A means less than 10% of the skin is affected. Stage 1B means more than 10% of the skin is affected.

Stage 2

Stage 2A means there are patches or plaques on the skin and the lymph nodes are enlarged but do not contain lymphoma cells. Stage 2B means there are one or more raised lumps or tumours on the skin, and the lymph nodes may or may not be enlarged but do not contain lymphoma cells.

Stage 3

In stage 3, 80% or more of the skin is affected with redness, swelling, itching and sometimes pain. The lymph nodes can be enlarged, but don't contain lymphoma cells. Stage 3A means there are few or no lymphoma cells in the bloodstream. Stage 3B means there is a moderate amount of lymphoma cells in the bloodstream.

Stage 4

In addition to the skin being affected, stage 4A means there are numerous abnormal lymphoma cells in the blood, or the lymph nodes contain lymphoma cells. Stage 4B means there is lymphoma in other organs.

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