

Hairy Cell Leukemia

Leukemia is a malignancy involving the white blood cells (leukocytes). Its name comes from the “hairy” projections extending from the cell when viewed under the microscope. These malignant cells replace normal cells in the bone marrow, spleen and blood. The median age of onset for Hairy Cell Leukemia is 50 years old (age range 20 - 90 years old) and it is more common in males. Symptoms include weakness, fatigue and abdominal pain (from an enlarged spleen). Physical findings include enlarged spleen and liver, enlarged lymph nodes and possibly skin lesions. In about half of the cases, all blood cell lines are affected (called pancytopenia) with the CBC (complete blood count) showing a low hemoglobin (anemia), low white blood cell count (leukopenia) and low platelet count (thrombocytopenia).

Complications of this illness include infections and bleeding. Hairy Cell Leukemia is viewed as a chronic disease, for which there is no definite cure, but it can be easily controlled and many cases will have a good prognosis. Removal of the spleen has been the mainstay treatment for this disease and half of those with splenectomy will need no further treatment.

Chemotherapy drugs have had an impact on survival. The most common drugs used are: interferon, 2- cdA (2-chlorodeoxyadenosine) and pentostatin (deoxycoformycin). These newer drugs will produce a remission in 60 - 90% of cases. Bone marrow transplantation is reserved for refractory cases not successfully treated with the above therapies and who are otherwise young and healthy. A few people with Hairy Cell Leukemia will never require treatment and are followed by close observation and CBC tests alone.

If your client has a history of Hairy Cell Leukemia, please answer the following:

1. Please list date of diagnosis:

2.

2. Please note type of treatment (check all that apply):

Close observation only _____ Pentostatin _____

Splenectomy _____ Bone marrow transplant _____

Interferon _____ Other, please specify _____

2-cdA _____

3. Is your client on any medications?

If yes, please give details

4. Please provide result of the most recent CBC (complete blood count):

date _____

hemoglobin _____

white blood cell count _____

platelet count _____

5. Has there been any evidence of recurrence?

If yes, please give details

6. Has your client smoked cigarettes or other form of tobacco in the last 5 years?

If yes please give details _____

7. Does your client have any other major health problems? (ex: heart disease, etc.)

If yes, please give details
