Lymphoma of Childhood
(Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma)

Lymphomas are common tumors in childhood. They are divided into Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL) in childhood is a widely spread, *malignant* (cancerous), aggressive *tumor* (lump). Because of the spread of this tumor, medications (*chemotherapy*) must be given that can treat the entire body. The cause of this tumor is not known. It occurs three times more often in boys than in girls. There are two forms of NHL. The *abdomen* (belly), head, and neck are involved in one form. The middle of the chest is involved in another form. Usually this disease shows itself as painless enlargement of the lymph nodes.

DIAGNOSIS (LEARNING WHAT IS WRONG)

The diagnosis is made by taking a tissue sample (*biopsy*) that can be looked at under a microscope. Fever and weight loss are often present. It is necessary to determine if the disease is localized or widely spread. Localized disease has a much better *prognosis* (outcome).

TREATMENT

NHL is wide spread in about 80% of children. The medication used to treat this illness is a multi-drug therapy. It is used in an aggressive manner. This means everything possible is done with this medication to try and bring the disease to *remission* (an inactive state). Medications produce remission in 90% of children. Maintenance therapy reduces the incidence of relapse following remission. Central nervous system (CNS) *prophylaxis* (preventative treatment) is necessary as this tumor can hide in the CNS (brain and spinal cord areas). With large tumors, surgery may be used to remove most of the tumor. Radiation is often used as part of the treatment plan.

PROGNOSIS

Patients with small localized tumors tend to do the best. Over half of all patients will be long term survivors. Your caregiver will discuss the treatment with you. Together you can make the decision to get the best possible outcome.

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