



Canine Lymphoma Informational Handout

Lymphoma is a cancer of the hematopoietic cells (cells in bone marrow that form red and white cells), specifically those that form a white cell called lymphocytes. It is the second most common type of cancer in dogs. Certain breeds are at increased risk for lymphoma, including Golden Retrievers, Boxers, Basset Hounds, Rottweilers, Bulldogs, Saint Bernards, Airedale Terriers, and Scottish Terriers. The most common form of lymphoma in dogs is multicentric, meaning it is present in the dog's lymph nodes. These are often felt as round, hard, firm, and sometimes painful nodules under the skin. This form accounts for 80-90% of dog lymphoma cases. Other places in the body that are affected include the GI tract, thoracic cavity, eyes, skin, nervous system, kidneys, and nasal passages. Because lymphoma can invade such a variety of places, symptoms depend on where the cancer is present. Aspirates of enlarged lymph nodes or other masses are often sufficient to detect the lymphoma cells. Sometimes additional diagnostics such as bloodwork, urine analysis, x-rays, ultrasound, and/or advanced imaging such as a CT scan or MRI are needed to locate the cancer. This allows us to determine the stage of the lymphoma (where the cancer is present in the body). Submitting cell samples for further analysis can determine the grade of the lymphoma (type of lymphocytes and their expected biological behavior). Staging and grading provide important information for the dog's prognosis and potential treatments.

There is bad and good news for treating canine lymphoma. The bad news is that lymphoma is rarely cured, with 6-10% of treated dogs eliminating the cancer entirely. Without any treatment, most dogs live 3-6 weeks past the date of diagnosis. The good news is that, although the cure rate for lymphoma is low, it generally has an excellent remission rate in response to treatment. Remission is partial or complete disappearance of all signs and symptoms of the cancer, although the cancer may still be present in the dog. It can significantly improve the dog's life expectancy, comfort, and quality of life. Surgery is reserved for specific cases where the lymphoma is isolated to a single location/organ and can be successfully removed. Steroid therapy alone can induce a short-term remission and usually extends survival time to 6-8 weeks from the diagnosis date. Laverdia is an oral chemotherapy that has recently been introduced for at-home treatment and management of canine lymphoma. Laverdia targets a specific protein in lymphoma cells called XPO1. This protein blocks specific signaling molecules from inducing cell death in cancerous cells, allowing the lymphoma to proliferate. Laverdia interferes with XPO1 and allows the normal signaling molecules to induce death in the lymphoma cells.

Chemotherapy remains the most effective method for inducing remission of canine lymphoma. Dog chemotherapy protocols differ from human ones, and many dogs do not experience the same severity of side effects that humans do. Chemotherapy can extend life expectancy from months to years, with most dogs living another 12 months and 10-25% living to 24 months. Current data indicates 80-95% of dogs that do chemotherapy go into remission. Relapses are common, but many dogs can enter remission again with an additional course of chemotherapy. We can help you with a referral to a veterinary oncologist at your request.