

Microcystic lymphatic malformation (mLM): Myths and misunderstandings

Lymphangioma circumscriptum has been reclassified as microcystic lymphatic malformation (mLM), a chronic, progressive vascular malformation.^{1,2} On the skin's surface, mLM produces lesions that leak, bleed, or itch, but the condition actually starts much deeper, caused by an overgrowth of lymphatic vessels beneath the skin.² Because mLM results from genetic changes that occur during development, it may be present at birth or become apparent later.^{2,3} For many patients and caregivers, that can mean feeling like you're always searching for answers.

One of the first questions many parents have is: **"Did I cause this?"**

They worry that mLM was something they passed down to their child or may have been caused by something they did (or didn't do) during pregnancy.

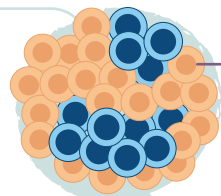
Is mLM hereditary?

The simple answer is no. mLM is a genetic disease, but it is not hereditary.^{2,3}

mLM is primarily caused by what's known as a **somatic mutation, which is a random DNA change** that occurs inside a single cell during development.³

This genetic change can disrupt normal cell signaling and contribute to abnormal growth of lymphatic vessels.²

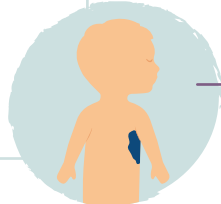
Because the somatic mutation that causes mLM does not affect the body's reproductive cells, **mLM is not a disease that can be passed on from a parent to a child.**⁴



• Somatic mutation can happen in any tissue of the body except the reproductive cells (sperm or egg).⁴



• This type of mutation randomly occurs while a baby is developing in the womb.²



• The mutation affects some but not all cells. This is why mLM affects certain areas or tissues while others are unaffected.^{2,3}

Is mLM cancer?

Sometimes, there is concern or confusion following a diagnosis of mLM, leading to questions such as, "Is mLM cancer?"

The answer is no.

Even though the gene mutation (called PIK3CA) that causes mLM is the same gene mutation involved in some cancers, **mLM is not cancer.**¹

That's a relief, but it's important not to let that overshadow the reality that mLM is also a serious disease with its own unique challenges.



Finding clarity and community

Life with mLM can bring uncertainty and you are likely to have a lot of other questions along the way.

The good news is, these are just a few of the **leading patient advocacy and medical organizations run by people who know how you feel, what you're going through, and where to find the answers you need**, so you can face the future with confidence, resilience, and optimism.



Pediatric Dermatology Research Alliance PeDRAResearch.org

Committed to research to prevent, treat, and cure childhood skin diseases



Lymphatic Education & Research Network LymphaticNetwork.org

A resource for anyone living with lymphatic diseases



Lymphatic Malformation Alliance LMAlliance.org

A resource for patients and caregivers, with a support team available to share experiences with lymphatic malformation



Consortium of iNvestigators of Vascular Anomalies Research.CHOP.edu/canvas

Advancing the care of patients affected by vascular anomalies through clinical research



VAccess VAccess.org

Provides educational resources for patients and families to better understand vascular anomalies



We're here for you

Palvella Support Navigators are available to answer questions, provide information about mLM, and help you find the support you need.

Visit BEYONDmLM.com today to schedule a call.

Support Navigators provide disease-state education and resource information only. They are not medical professionals, cannot provide medical advice or treatment recommendations, and should not be considered a substitute for consultation with a qualified healthcare provider.



Visit BEYONDmLM.com for resources, information, and everyday ways to manage living with mLM.



References: 1. ISSVA Classification of Vascular Anomalies. ©2025 International Society for the Study of Vascular Anomalies. Available at issva.org/classification Accessed August 21, 2026. 2. Kamireddy A, Weiss C, Martini J, Kelly M, Bueth MG. Microcystic and macrocystic lymphatic malformations. *J Vasc Anom.* 2026;7e133. 3. Canaud G, Hammill AM, Adams D, Vikkula M, Keppler-Moreuil KM. A review of mechanisms of disease across PIK3CA-related disorders with vascular manifestations. *Orphanet J Rare Dis.* 2021;16:306. 4. Miles B, Tadi P. Genetics, Somatic Mutation. In: StatPearls. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; April 17, 2023.

Content developed in collaboration with leading patient advocacy and medical organizations, including:

