

Lymph nodes contain only isolated tumour cells (Core and Non-core)

Isolated tumour cell clusters (ITCs) are single tumour cells or small clusters of carcinoma spanning less than or equal to 0.2 mm in greatest dimension or adding to less than or equal to 200 cells in a single histological cross section. ITCs can be detected by routine haematoxylin and eosin (H&E) stains or immunohistochemistry (IHC) but should be verified in H&E-stained slides.

If no macro- and/or micrometastatic carcinoma is identified in lymph nodes, the number of lymph nodes containing only ITCs needs to be reported.

Currently ITCs are not classified as metastatic deposits for the purposes of staging. If only ITCs are identified in lymph nodes, the pN classification is pN0(i+).

If macrometastatic or micrometastatic carcinoma is present in lymph nodes, the number of lymph nodes containing ITCs should not be added to the number of lymph nodes with metastatic carcinoma for staging purposes, but should be included in the total number of nodes evaluated, and reporting the number of lymph nodes with *only* ITCs becomes optional. (The American Joint Committee on Cancer Staging Manual recommends that the number of lymph nodes involved by ITC only should be noted in the report.¹)

In the post-neoadjuvant setting, the presence of ITCs (ypN0(i+) category) excludes pCR.

Reference

- 1 Amin MB, Edge S, Greene FL, Byrd DR, Brookland RK, Washington MK, Gershenwald JE, Compton CC, Hess KR, Sullivan DC, Jessup JM, Brierley JD, Gaspar LE, Schilsky RL, Balch CM, Winchester DP, Asare EA, Madera M, Gress DM and Meyer LR (eds) (2017). *AJCC Cancer Staging Manual. 8th ed.* Springer, New York.