



# Childhood Cancer Fact Sheet

## for Patients and Caregivers



About 9,620 children under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer in the US in 2024. Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in children ages 1 to 14. About 1,040 children under the age of 15 are expected to die from cancer in 2024.\*

Childhood cancer death rates have gone down by more than half since 1971. This is largely because improvements in treatment from clinical trials. Approximately 85% of children with cancer live 5 or more years after their diagnosis. Survival rates depend greatly on the type of cancer though. The highest survival rates are for thyroid cancer and Hodgkin lymphoma. There are lower survival rates in other cancers, such as acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL) and Ewing sarcoma.

## Types of Childhood Cancers

The types of cancers that occur most often in children are different from those seen most often in adults. The most common are:

- Leukemia
- Brain and spinal cord tumors
- Neuroblastoma
- Wilms tumor
- Lymphoma (including both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin)
- Rhabdomyosarcoma
- Retinoblastoma
- Bone cancer (including osteosarcoma and Ewing sarcoma)

In rare cases, children may develop other cancers that are much more common in adults.

## Prevention

- There are no known ways to prevent childhood cancers.
- Certain cancer treatments (such as radiation and chemo) can increase the risk of other cancers.
- Children with genetic disorders such as Down syndrome or Li-Fraumeni syndrome also have an increased risk of cancer.

## Signs and Symptoms of Cancer In Children

Symptoms of cancer in children can look like other common childhood conditions. This can make it harder to identify early and delay a cancer diagnosis.

All children should have regular checkups and should be taken to a doctor if they're having any unusual or unexplained symptoms that don't go away. These might include:

- An unusual lump or swelling
- Unexplained paleness or loss of energy
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- An ongoing pain in one area of the body
- Limping
- A fever or illness that doesn't go away
- Frequent headaches, often with vomiting
- Sudden eye or vision changes
- Sudden unexplained weight loss

\*American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2024*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2024.

## Treating Children With Cancer

Treatment for childhood cancer is based on the type and extent of the cancer. The main types of treatment used are surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy (chemo). Some types of childhood cancers might be treated with high-dose chemo, followed by a stem cell transplant. And newer types of treatment, such as targeted therapy drugs and immunotherapy, are becoming increasingly important in treating some types of childhood cancer.

Most children are treated at children's cancer centers. Many of these centers work with the Children's Oncology Group to bring clinical trials and other resources to families around the world.

Childhood cancer survivors can have late or long-term side effects from their cancer or cancer treatments.

Late side effects don't start until after treatment ends. They can develop weeks, months, or many years later. Long-term side effects start during treatment and continue even after treatment ends.

Late or long-term side effects might include:

- Growth or hormone problems
- Trouble having children in future (low fertility)
- Heart or lung problems
- Hearing or vision problems
- Bone or organ problems
- Pain or swelling
- A higher risk of getting another type of cancer later in life

## Survivors of Childhood Cancers

All survivors of childhood cancers should have a survivorship plan that includes:

- Details of what cancer treatments were given, when, and how much (dose)



- Information on any side effects, concerns, or relapses
- Possible late and long-term side effects of their cancer and cancer treatments
- Plans for long-term follow-up care
- Communication with primary care provider
- Information and resources for money, insurance, work, or school concerns.
- Resources for emotional and mental support (such as counseling or support groups)
- Recommended cancer screening tests
- Vaccine recommendations
- Current medicines

The Children's Oncology Group offers **Long-Term Follow-Up Guidelines for Survivors of Childhood, Adolescent, and Young Adult (AYA) Cancers**.

Visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/cancer/cancer-in-children](https://cancer.org/cancer/cancer-in-children) or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.