



Adolescent Cancer Fact Sheet

for Patients and Caregivers



About 5,290 adolescents (teenagers ages 15 to 19) will be diagnosed with cancer in 2024 in the US. Cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in adolescents. About 550 teens ages 15 to 19 will die from cancer this year.*

The chance of getting cancer is about equal for teen boys and girls, but cancer survival rates are slightly higher in girls than in boys. This is likely because of the different types of cancers that happen in males and females.

Types of Adolescent Cancers

The types of cancer seen most often in adolescents include:

- Lymphoma (including Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin)
- Acute leukemias
- Thyroid cancer
- Brain and spinal cord tumors
- Testicular cancer
- Sarcoma (bone or soft tissue cancer)
- Melanoma (skin cancer)
- Ovarian cancer

Prevention

Lifestyle and environmental risk factors are not thought to play much of a role in cancers in teens. But there are some things that teenagers can do to help lower their risk of getting certain kinds of cancer, such as:

- Not smoking
- Limiting time spent in the sun, and avoiding tanning salons
- Limiting the number of sex partners, and using safe sex practices. This can lower the risk of some types of cancer that

may be caused by viruses, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

- Getting vaccines against infections that increase the risk of certain types of cancer, such as the HPV vaccine and the hepatitis B (HBV) vaccine

Signs and Symptoms of Cancer in Adolescents

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

All adolescents 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 tiredness, paleness, or loss of energy
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Ongoing limping or pain in one part of the body
- A fever or illness that doesn't go away
- Frequent headaches, often with vomiting
- Sudden eye or vision changes
- Sudden or unexplained weight loss
- A new mole or other spot on the skin, or one that changes in size, shape, or color

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

Treating Adolescents With Cancer

Treatment for adolescents with cancer is based on the type and stage of the cancer. Adolescents may get treated in a childhood or adult cancer setting based on their cancer type and what they would rather do.

The main types of treatment used for cancer in teens are surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy (chemo), targeted therapy, immunotherapy, stem cell transplant, and clinical trials. Sometimes, more than one type of treatment is used.

When a teen needs cancer treatment, the cancer care team can help with many issues, such as treatment effects on fertility, education or employment needs, health insurance concerns, and financial issues.

Late and Long-term Effects of Adolescent Cancer Treatment

Adolescent cancer survivors can have late or long-term 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 effects might include:

- Growth or hormone problems
- Trouble having children (low fertility)
- Heart or lung problems
- Hearing or vision problems
- Problems with organs, such as the kidneys or bones
- Pain or swelling in parts of the body
- A higher risk of getting another cancer later in life



Survivors of Adolescent Cancers

All survivors of adolescent 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 effects of their cancer and cancer treatment
- 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 Groups 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-adolescents or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.

