

Childhood Cancer

Information Sheet



What is childhood cancer?

Childhood cancer is not just one disease, but a group of 12 major types of diseases. Childhood cancer develops in different parts of the body than cancer that develops in adults.

Cancer is an abnormal growth of cells. **Cells** are tiny, basic building blocks of all living things.

All parts of the body, organs, muscles, skin, bones and blood are made of cells. Cells are so small that over 50,000 cells can fit on the head of a pin!

Cancer develops when damaged cells grow and spread faster than healthy cells. The damaged cells crowd out the normal cells.

In Wisconsin, childhood cancer is very rare. The types of cancers that can happen in children vary from those than can happen in adults. Leukemia, brain cancer and lymphoma are the most diagnosed childhood cancers in Wisconsin.

What causes childhood cancer?

Childhood cancer is a very complex disease. Doctors sometimes aren't sure why some children get cancer and others don't.

There is a lot of research happening to find out what causes childhood cancer.

How can I prevent cancer for a child?

Little is known about what causes childhood cancer. Since it is very rare, scientists and doctors are unsure how to prevent it.

Healthy choices of being active, eating fruits and vegetables, and not smoking are not known to influence a child's risk of getting cancer. You should help your child learn the importance of these healthy choices to help lower the chance of cancer developing in adulthood.



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Can you detect childhood cancer?

Childhood cancers are hard to find early because the symptoms can be the same as other common illnesses or injuries. Parents should make sure that their child has regular medical check-ups.

Parents should watch their children for any symptoms that do not go away or unusual signs:

- A strange lump or swelling
- Loss of energy or paleness for no reason
- Easy bruising

Talk to your health care provider if your child experiences any of these symptoms. These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer, but the only way to know what is causing them is to talk with your health care provider about them.



How is cancer treated?

The most common treatments for cancer are surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

Cancer treatment and screening depends on:

- The type of cancer
- The stage of cancer (how far the cancer has spread)

Do people survive after being diagnosed with cancer?

The chances of a child living after being diagnosed with cancer depend on the cancer type, the stage and many other factors.

There has been a lot of progress in treating childhood cancers. This progress has led to the majority of children surviving into adulthood.

Where can I get more information?

The National Cancer Institute provides accurate and up-to-date information about clinical trials, cancer types, prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and end of life care.

Phone: 1-800-4CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

Website: www.cancer.gov

For more local information, please contact:

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Carbone Cancer Center
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



**Cancer Health
Disparities Initiative**

ruralcancernetwork.org

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