



Most Common Types of Pediatric Cancers and their Causes

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INTRODUCTION

A term used to describe cancers that occur between birth and 14 years of age. Pediatric cancers are very rare and may differ from adult cancers in the way they grow and spread, how they are treated, and how they respond to treatment. The most common types of pediatric cancer are leukemia, brain and spinal cord tumors, lymphoma, neuroblastoma, Wilms tumor (a type of kidney cancer), retinoblastoma, and cancers of the bone and soft tissue. Also called childhood cancer. The most common types of pediatric cancer are leukemia, brain and spinal cord tumors, lymphoma, neuroblastoma, Wilms tumor (a type of kidney cancer), retinoblastoma, and cancers of the bone and soft tissue. Also called childhood cancer. Children who have cancer are often treated at a children's cancer centre, which is a hospital or unit in a hospital that specializes in treating children with cancer.

DESCRIPTION

The doctors and other health professionals at these centers have special training and expertise to give complete care to children. Specialists at a children's cancer center are likely to include primary care physicians, pediatric oncologists/hematologists, pediatric surgical specialists, radiation oncologists, rehabilitation specialists, pediatric nurse specialists, social workers, and psychologists. At these centers, clinical trials are available for most types of cancer that occur in children, and the opportunity to participate in a trial is offered to many patients.

The causes of most childhood cancers are not known. About 5 percent of all cancers in children are caused by an inherited mutation (a genetic mutation that can be passed from parents to their children). Most cancers in children, like those in adults, are thought to develop as a result of mutations in genes that lead to uncontrolled cell growth and eventually cancer. In adults, these gene mutations reflect the cumulative effects of aging and long-term exposure to cancer-causing substances. However, identifying potential environmental causes of childhood cancer has been difficult, partly because cancer in children is rare and partly because it is difficult

to determine what children might have been exposed to early in their development. More information about possible causes of cancer in children is available in the fact sheet, Cancer in Children and Adolescents.

Cancer occurs in people of all ages and can affect any part of the body. It begins with genetic change in single cells, that then grow into a mass (or tumour), that invades other parts of the body and causes harm and death if left untreated. Unlike cancer in adults, the vast majority of childhood cancers do not have a known cause. Many studies have sought to identify the causes of childhood cancer, but very few cancers in children are caused by environmental or lifestyle factors. Cancer prevention efforts in children should focus on behaviours that will prevent the child from developing preventable cancer as an adult. Because it is generally not possible to prevent cancer in children, the most effective strategy to reduce the burden of cancer in children and improve outcomes is to focus on a prompt, correct diagnosis followed by effective, evidence-based therapy with tailored supportive care.

CONCLUSION

Early diagnosis is relevant in all settings and improves survival for many cancers. Programmes to promote early and correct diagnosis have been successfully implemented in countries of all income levels, often through the collaborative efforts of governments, civil society and nongovernmental organizations, with vital roles played by parent groups. Childhood cancer is associated with a range of warning symptoms, such as fever, severe and persistent headaches, bone pain and weight loss that can be detected by families and by trained primary health-care providers

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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