

CHILDHOOD CANCER



DEFINITION:

Childhood cancer is a cancerous growth whose specific characteristic is a loss of normal cell control. It is not as single disease; there are many types.

INCIDENCE:

Of all childhood diseases, cancer is the major cause of death in children ages 1 to 15 years. Approximately 7000 children younger than 15 years of age are diagnosed with cancer each year in the United States. Leukemia and lymphomas account for 38% and tumors of the nervous system account for 28%.

MAJOR TYPES:

Leukemia is a condition where there are too many white blood cells in the blood and bone marrow. Because of this, the body is unable to fight against infections.

Brain tumor often referred to as Medulloblastoma, Astrocytoma, and Brainstemglioma which affect the central nervous system.

GENERAL SYMPTOMS:

- Fatigue
- Cough
- Changes in bowel activity
- Skeletal pain
- Sweating
- Weight loss
- Changes in blood composition
- Persistent pain
- Fever

CAUSES:

The causes of most cancer remain unknown. A minority of cancers are known to be hereditary (i.e., retinoblastomas and Wilms' tumors). Factors known of increasing the risk of Leukemia are children with chromosomal abnormalities (Down syndrome) and chromosomal instability (AIDS). Exposure to large amounts of radiation and toxic chemicals are also factors.

TREATMENT:

- Chemotherapy – use of a chemically synthetic drug(s)

- Radiation - energy that destroys cancerous tissue
- Surgery - part or the entire tumor may be removed

SIDE EFFECTS OF CANCER AND OF TREATMENT:

- Retardation of growth
- Impaired fertility
- Scoliosis or other skeletal impairments
- Impaired renal, pulmonary, hepatic, and/or cardiac function
- Neuropsychological defects
- Psychosocial deficits
- Hair loss
- Vomiting

TEACHING TIPS:

- Allow student to stop exercising when fatigued.
- Be aware of side effects.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the student.
- Work closely with the child's physician, rehabilitation, therapist, and parent(s).
- Assign student to less strenuous activities.
- Avoid highly competitive activities (could cause injury).
- Begin exercise at the student's present level and build slowly toward a higher level of fitness.

Information on this sheet contains only suggested guidelines. Each student must be considered individually, and in many cases, a physician's written consent should be obtained.