



Leukemia in Children



Overview

This is a cancer of the blood cells. Commonly it affects white blood cells. It can also affect red blood cells and platelets.

Causes and risk factors

We don't always know what causes leukemia. Cancer develops because of a mutation in a cell's DNA. This is the genetic blueprint for the body's cells. With leukemia, blood cells grow and divide out of control. Abnormal cells crowd out healthy cells in the blood. There are things that increase the risk for this disease. It can run in families. The risk is higher after chemotherapy or radiation therapy. And, being exposed to harmful chemicals can increase the risk, too.

Types

There are many types of leukemia. We classify them by the type of cells involved and the way the cancer progresses. Some types of leukemia are more common in children. Some are more common in adults. Lab tests identify each specific type of leukemia.

Symptoms

Leukemia causes fever, chills and fatigue. It can cause bone pain and weight loss. A person with leukemia may have a lot of infections. They may bleed and bruise easily. They may have swollen lymph nodes. And, they may sweat a lot.

Treatment

Treatment options include chemotherapy and radiation therapy. It's also treated with biological therapy and targeted therapy. Some people benefit from a stem cell transplant. Your doctor will create a care plan that's right for you.