

Childhood Cancer FAQs

1. Is cancer contagious?

No, cancer cannot be spread by people. It is not like a strep throat or the flu. No one can catch it from another person.

2. Did the child with cancer do something to cause the disease?

No, cancer can strike anyone and nobody is to blame. Doctors and scientists are working hard to figure out what does cause cancer in children.

3. Is all cancer the same disease?

No, there are many different forms of cancer. Childhood cancers are different than adult cancers. Each type of cell in the human body creates a different form of cancer—from the blood cells to bone cells to brain or muscle cells.

4. Why does someone with cancer lose their hair and feel sick a lot?

Hair loss, nausea, fatigue, and other symptoms are the side-effects of the medications given to get rid of the cancer. The symptoms do not come from the disease. The side-effects will go away when the medication is stopped.

5. Can cancer cause emotional stress as well as physical stress?

Yes, it is very usual for the patient, parents, siblings, classmates and friends to feel overwhelmed, sad, or anxious. Support from others is very important during this difficult time.

6. Can a child with cancer go to school?

A child with cancer may need to be out of school for a period of time but a home instructor can be provided by the school district to keep the student current with school work. After the initial stages of treatment, the child can return to school but may miss more than the usual number of days due to feeling ill or clinic appointments.

7. Do children with cancer need to be treated differently than their friends or siblings?

No, most children with cancer want to be treated just as they were before diagnosis and like their friends or siblings. While the ill child will need some extra care at times, behavior and academic expectations should stay consistent.

8. Should we talk about cancer with children?

Yes, open and honest communication is the most helpful way to address a cancer diagnosis for both the ill child and other children around the patient. Questions should be answered honestly and with developmentally appropriate language. The child with cancer should be given the choice about if and when they want to talk with others about their personal medical information.