

## ***Childhood Cancer Facts and Warning Signs***

More kids die from childhood cancers than any other disease. In fact, cancer kills more children than asthma, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, and pediatric AIDS combined. By the age of 20, one in every 330 Americans will develop cancer. Approximately 10,400 children and teens ages 0-14 years will be diagnosed with cancer this year in the United States.

Treating childhood cancer differs greatly from treating adults with cancer. Children diagnosed with cancer benefit from being treated at centers specializing in pediatric oncology. These centers use protocols developed specifically for children, specialized pediatric equipment, and often have access to clinical research studies, the latest technology, and new therapies designed particularly for fighting childhood cancer.

### **Characteristics and Causes**

- Childhood cancers fall into 12 major categories, with leukemia having the highest incidence rate.
- Childhood cancers rarely are found in adults. They are almost always exclusive to children.
- Cancers diagnosed in children react differently than most adult cancers.
- Cancer in children is random. No ethnic group, socioeconomic class, or geographic region has more cases than any other.
- Cancer in children tends to form in parts of their bodies that grow and change, such as their blood system, brain, and kidneys.
- The origin of most childhood cancers is unknown and cannot be prevented at this time. Adult cancers often result from smoking, diet, occupation, or exposure to agents that cause cancer.

### **Treatments and Death Rates**

- The childhood cancer mortality rate has declined 48 percent since 1975.
- Approximately 2,300 children will die this year from cancer.
- Cure rates vary for specific cancers depending on the stage of diagnosis and the cancer type; some forms of cancer remain resistant to treatment. For example, due to better treatments and research, children with leukemia can be cured almost 80 percent of the time. Neuroblastoma is among the most difficult childhood cancers to cure.
- The five-year survival rates for childhood cancer have increased greatly over the past 30 years. Prior to 1970, children diagnosed with cancer would survive less than 50 percent of the time. Today, due to modern forms of treatment, the five-year survival rate is almost 80 percent.

### **American Cancer Society's Childhood Cancer Warning Signs**

Continued, unexplained weight loss

Headaches with vomiting in the morning

Increased swelling or persistent pain in bones or joints

Lump or mass in abdomen, neck, or elsewhere

Development of a whitish appearance in the pupil of the eye

Recurrent fevers not due to infections

Excessive bruising or bleeding

Noticeable paleness or prolonged tiredness

*Sources: American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute*