

# FACTS ABOUT PAEDIATRIC CANCER

- Paediatric cancer is **rare, but is fatal** if not diagnosed and treated.
- Most paediatric cancers are **curable if found early** and referred to Princess Marina Hospital immediately.
- There are **many types** of paediatric cancers.
- Recognition of cancer symptoms is **life-saving!**

## ACUTE LEUKAEMIA NEEDS TO BE TREATED RIGHT AWAY

Your child's doctor should consider the following:

- **Physical exam:** Your doctor checks for swollen lymph nodes, spleen, or liver.
- **Blood tests:** The lab does a full blood count. Leukaemia can cause a very high level of white blood cells, though sometimes the count is low if in conjunction with other symptoms. It may also cause low levels of platelets and hemoglobin (which is found inside red blood cells).
- **Spinal Fluid Test:** Leukaemia cells can hide in the water surrounding the brain. A needle is inserted into the patient's back to collect and test this fluid.
- **Bone marrow aspiration:** The doctor uses a thick, hollow needle to remove samples of bone marrow.
- **Bone marrow biopsy:** The doctor uses a very thick, hollow needle to remove a small piece of bone and bone marrow.

**If cancer is suspected, your child's doctor should consult the paediatric oncology team at Princess Marina Hospital.**

▶ **Paediatric Haematologist/Oncologist at Princess Marina Hospital**

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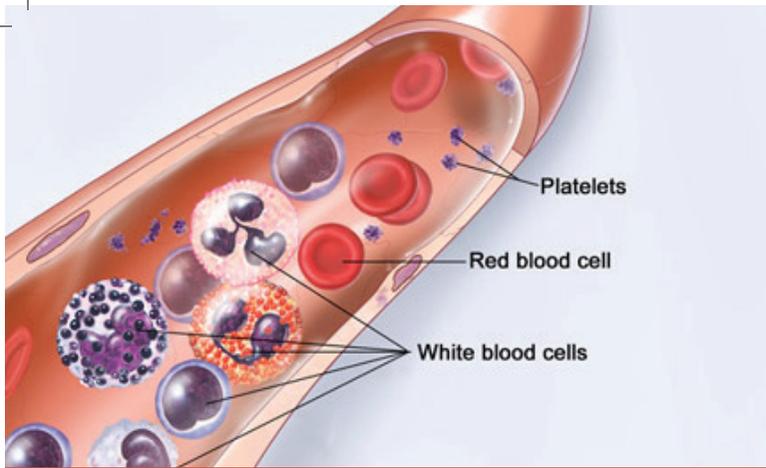


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**PAEDIATRIC CANCER ▶**

Cancers of the Blood





# LEUKAEMIA IS THE MOST COMMON PAEDIATRIC CANCER



An example of tiny red dots under the skin, called petechiae.

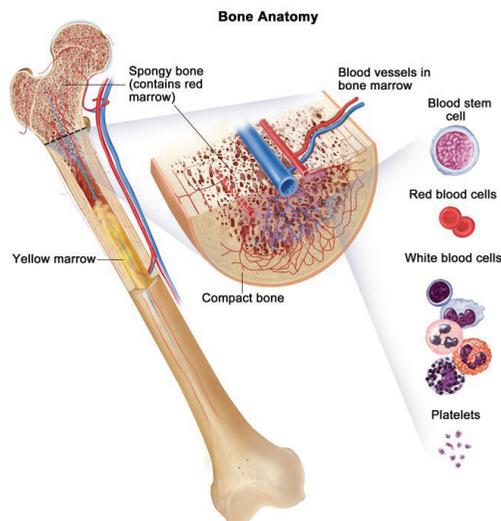
## CANCERS OF THE BLOOD ▼

**Bone marrow is like a factory deep inside our bones where blood is made.**

Our bone marrow makes:

- Red blood cells (which carry oxygen from our lungs to the rest of the body)
- White blood cells (which fight germs and infections)
- Platelets (which help stop bleeding)

When cells grow old or get damaged, they die, and new cells take their place. Most blood cells mature in the bone marrow and then move into the blood vessels.



**Leukaemia is a cancer of the blood.** Leukaemia cells are abnormal, “sick” white blood cells that don’t die when they should. They crowd out normal, “healthy” white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This makes it hard for normal blood cells to do their work.

### Symptoms:

- Non-painful swollen lymph nodes greater than the size of a grape or 2.5 cm
- Any size swollen nodes which do not go away after 3-4 weeks
- Swollen lymph nodes in more than one location (especially lymph nodes in the neck, armpit, and groin)
- Fevers that last more than 5 days without a known cause
- Night sweats that make the linens wet
- Feeling weak or tired for greater than 2 weeks without a known cause
- Refusal to walk or pain in the bones or joints (especially pain at night)
- Bleeding and bruising easily (bleeding gums, purplish patches in the skin, or tiny red spots under the skin)
- Swelling or discomfort in the abdomen (from a swollen spleen or liver)
- Weight loss for no known reason

Most often, these symptoms **alone** are not due to cancer.

An infection or other health problem may also cause these symptoms. Only a doctor can tell for sure. Anyone with these symptoms should tell the doctor so that problems can be diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

**Three areas where swollen lymph nodes occur**



Armpit



Groin



Neck