About 5,000 to 6,000 adolescents (teenagers ages 15 to 19) are diagnosed with cancer each year in the US. Cancer is the fourth-leading cause of death in this age group after accidents, suicide, and homicide.

The chance of getting cancer is about equal for teen boys and girls, but cancer survival rates are slightly higher in girls than in boys, likely because of the different types of cancers that happen in males and females.

**Types of Cancers That Develop in Adolescents**

The types of cancers seen in adolescents can also occur in other age groups. However, the most common types of cancers in adolescents are different from those most common in young children or adults. They include:

- Lymphoma (including both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin)
- Acute leukemias
- Thyroid cancer
- Brain and spinal cord tumors
- Testicular cancer
- Sarcoma (bone or soft tissue cancer)
- Melanoma (skin cancer)
- Ovarian cancer

**Prevention**

Unlike with many cancers in older adults, lifestyle-related risk factors are not thought to play much of a role in cancers in teens. But there are some things that might help teenagers lower the risk of getting certain kinds of cancer, such as:

- Not smoking
- Limiting time spent in the sun, and avoiding tanning salons
- Limiting the number of sex partners, and using safe sex practices. This can lower the risk of some infections linked to cancer, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Getting certain vaccines that protect against certain infections that are linked to cancer, such as the HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine and hepatitis B (HBV) vaccine.

**Signs and Symptoms of Cancer in Adolescents**

Sometimes, the early symptoms of cancer in teens might not be recognized right away since they are often similar to those caused by common illnesses or injuries.
It’s important to schedule regular checkups and get a teen checked if any unusual signs or symptoms don’t go away, such as:

- An unusual lump or swelling in the neck, belly, testicle, or elsewhere
- Unexplained tiredness and loss of energy
- Easy bruising
- Abnormal bleeding
- Ongoing pain in one part of the body
- Unexplained fever or illness that doesn’t go away
- Frequent headaches, often with vomiting
- Sudden eye or vision changes
- Loss of appetite or unplanned weight loss
- A new mole or other spot on the skin, or one that changes in size, shape, or color

Treating Adolescents With Cancer

Treatment for cancers in adolescents is based on the type and stage of the cancer. Sometimes, more than one treatment type is used.

The main types of treatment used for cancer in teens are surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy (chemo), targeted therapy, immunotherapy, stem cell transplant, and clinical trials.

When a teen needs cancer treatment, the cancer care team can provide help and guidance with many issues, such as treatment effects on fertility, education or employment needs, health insurance concerns, and financial issues.

Late and Long-Term Effects of Cancer Treatment on Adolescents

Adolescents who have had cancer might be at risk for long-term effects from the cancer or its treatment. They might also be at risk for effects that might not show up until many years later (known as late effects).

Some of the long-term or late effects might include:

- Impaired fertility (ability to have children)
- Increased risk of developing another cancer later in life
- Heart or lung problems (from certain chemo drugs or radiation to the chest)
- Hearing or vision problems (from certain chemo drugs or radiation to the head)
- Problems with other organs, such as the kidneys or bones
- Pain or swelling in parts of the body
- Hormone deficiencies
- Other cancers

Visit cancer.org/cancer/cancer-in-adolescents for detailed information on cancer in adolescents or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. We’re here when you need us.