

ASCO ANSWERS

WILMS TUMOR

WHAT IS WILMS TUMOR?

Wilms tumor is a type of childhood cancer that begins in the kidneys. The cancer occurs when immature kidney cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass called a tumor. Although Wilms tumor can develop in both kidneys, it usually only affects one. Wilms tumor is often detected before it spreads to other parts of the body. It is most common in children age 5 and younger.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE KIDNEYS?

The kidneys are reddish-brown, fist-sized organs located above the waist on either side of the spine. They filter blood and remove impurities, excess minerals and salts, and surplus water that leave the body as wastewater (urine). These organs also produce hormones to help control blood pressure, red blood cell production, and other functions. Because each kidney works independently, one kidney can be removed while preserving the function of the other.

WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing a cancer, such as where it is located, if or where it has spread, and if it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. There are five stages for Wilms tumor: stages I through V (one through five). More information is available at www.cancer.net/wilms.

HOW IS WILMS TUMOR TREATED?

The treatment of Wilms tumor depends on the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the child's overall health. Surgery is common for all stages of the cancer. Either the whole kidney (along with surrounding tissue and nearby lymph nodes) or the tumor and part of the kidney are removed. Chemotherapy for Wilms tumor is usually intravenous (injected into a vein). The main drugs used for Wilms tumor include vincristine (Oncovin, Vincasar PFS), dactinomycin (Cosmegen, Lyovac Cosmegen), and doxorubicin (Adriamycin), although other drugs may be used. Radiation therapy is generally used to treat stage III and IV Wilms tumor.

When making treatment decisions, consider a clinical trial; most children with cancer are treated as part of one. Talk with your child's doctor about all treatment options. The side effects of Wilms tumor treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your child's health care team.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD COPE WITH WILMS TUMOR?

Helping your child understand a cancer diagnosis is a key part of the coping process. Children with cancer should be treated at a pediatric cancer center. These centers not only provide access to the latest treatments, they offer age-appropriate programs for social and emotional needs. Encouraging your child and other family members to share their emotions can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

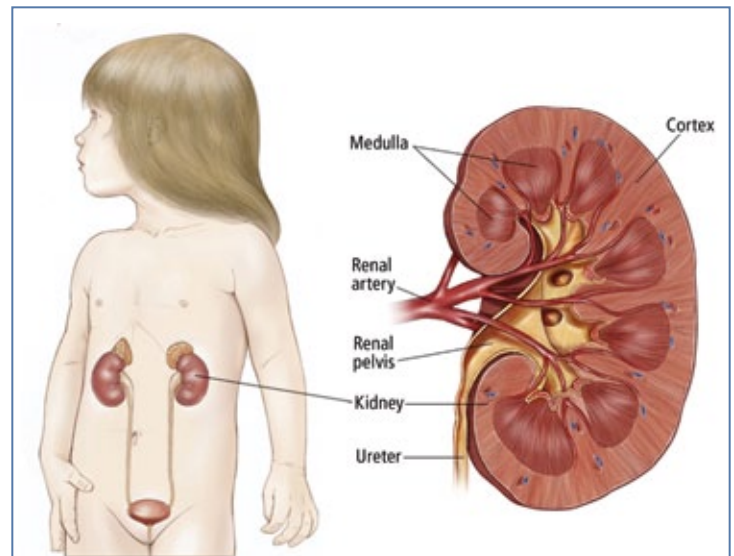


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Find additional cancer information at www.cancer.net.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your child's health care. Consider asking the following questions of your child's doctors:

- What stage is the tumor?
- Can you explain my child's pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Would you explain my child's treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to my child?
- What treatment plan do you recommend for my child? Why?
- Who is part of the treatment team and what does each member do?
- How will this treatment affect my child's daily life? Will he or she be able to go to school and perform his or her usual activities?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my child's cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- What short-term and long-term side effects may be associated with my child's cancer treatment?
- What follow-up tests will my child need, and how often will he or she need them?
- Where can I find emotional support for my child? For my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/wilms.

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www.cancer.net, or call 888-651-3038.**

Cancer.Net™ 

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TERMS TO KNOW

Benign:

A tumor that is not cancerous

Biopsy:

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

Chemotherapy:

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

Clinical trial:

A research study that tests a new treatment or drug

Lymph node:

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

Malignant:

A tumor that is cancerous

Metastasis:

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

Pediatric oncologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating children and teens with cancer

Partial nephrectomy:

Surgery to remove a portion of a kidney and usually some kidney tissue surrounding a kidney tumor

Prognosis:

Chance of recovery

Radiation therapy:

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

Radical nephrectomy:

Surgery to remove the entire kidney

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue