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<http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/astrocytoma-childhood/about-clinical-trials>

[Astrocytoma - Childhood - About Clinical Trials \[1\]](#)

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 03/2016

ON THIS PAGE: You will learn more about clinical trials, which are the main way that new medical approaches are tested to see how well they work. To see other pages, use the menu.

What are clinical trials?

Doctors and scientists are always looking for better ways to care for children with astrocytoma. To make scientific advances, doctors create research studies involving volunteers, called clinical trials. In fact, every drug that is now approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was tested in clinical trials.

Many clinical trials focus on new treatments. Researchers want to learn if a new treatment is safe, effective, and possibly better than the treatment doctors use now. These types of studies evaluate new drugs, different combinations of existing treatments, new approaches to radiation therapy or surgery, and new methods of treatment. Children who participate in clinical trials can be some of the first to get a treatment before it is available to the public. However, there is no guarantee that the new treatment will be safe, effective, or better than what doctors use now.

Some clinical trials study new ways to relieve symptoms and side effects during treatment. Others study ways to manage the late effects that may happen a long time after treatment. Talk with your child's doctor about clinical trials for symptoms and side effects. There are also clinical trials studying ways to prevent cancer.

Deciding to join a clinical trial

People decide to participate in clinical trials for many reasons. For some patients, a clinical trial

is the best treatment option available. Because standard treatments are not perfect, patients are often willing to face the added uncertainty of a clinical trial in the hope of a better result. Other people volunteer for clinical trials because they know that these studies are the only way to make progress in treating astrocytoma. Even if they do not benefit directly from the clinical trial, their participation may benefit future children with astrocytoma.

Sometimes people have concerns that, in a clinical trial, their child may receive no treatment by being given a placebo or a “sugar pill.” The use of placebos in cancer clinical trials in this way is rare overall and not done at all in childhood cancer research. Find out more about [placebos in cancer clinical trials](#). [3]

Patient safety and informed consent

To join a clinical trial, parents and children must participate in a process known as informed consent. During informed consent, the doctor should list all of the patient’s options, so that the person understands how the new treatment differs from the standard treatment. The doctor must also list all of the risks of the new treatment, which may or may not be different from the risks of standard treatment. Finally, the doctor must explain what will be required of each patient in order to participate in the clinical trial, including the number of doctor visits, tests, and the schedule of treatment.

People who participate in a clinical trial may stop participating at any time for any personal or medical reason. This may include that the new treatment is not working or there are serious side effects. Clinical trials are also closely monitored by experts who watch for any problems with each study. It is important that parents talk with the doctor and researchers about who will be providing their child’s treatment and care during the clinical trial, after the clinical trial ends, and/or if the patient chooses to leave the clinical trial before it ends.

Finding a clinical trial

Research through clinical trials is ongoing for all types of tumors. For specific topics being studied for astrocytoma, learn more in the [Latest Research](#) [4] section.

Cancer.Net offers a lot of information about clinical trials in other areas of the website, including a [complete section on clinical trials](#) [5] and [places to search for clinical trials for a specific type of tumor](#) [6].

In addition, this website offers free access to a [video-based educational program](#) [7] about cancer clinical trials, located outside of this guide.

The [next section in this guide is Latest Research](#) [4]. It explains areas of scientific research currently going on for astrocytoma. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/astrocytoma-childhood/about-clinical-trials>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24390>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18499>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24876>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24878>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/32596>