

Leukemia - Acute Lymphocytic - ALL - Risk Factors [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 11/2014

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing ALL. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The cause of ALL is not known. In general, ALL is most likely to affect children and older adults. The following factors may raise a person's risk of developing ALL:

Age. Children younger than 15 and adults older than 50 are more likely to develop ALL.

Race. White people are somewhat more likely than black people to develop ALL for reasons that are not understood.

Genetic disorders. People with Down syndrome, [ataxia telangiectasia \[3\]](#), [Li-Fraumeni syndrome \[4\]](#), Klinefelter syndrome, Fanconi anemia, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome, and Bloom syndrome have a higher risk of developing ALL than the general population.

High doses of radiation. People who have been exposed to high levels of radiation, such as long-term survivors of atomic bombs, may be more likely to develop ALL. Exposure to electromagnetic fields or high-voltage electric lines has not been proven to increase a person's risk of ALL.

Viruses. Occasionally, ALL or specific types of lymphoma can be associated with a previous viral infection, such as the human T-cell leukemia virus-1 or the Epstein-Barr virus.

Recent genetic research has shown that many young children who develop ALL may have had changes that are signs of the disease in a very small number of cells before they were born, although it may take several years before the disease develops and causes symptoms. More research is being done to try to understand this finding in more detail.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/leukemia-acute-lymphocytic-all/risk-factors>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18502>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19133>