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Leukemia - Acute Myeloid - AML - Childhood - Overview [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 01/2013

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about this disease and the parts of the body it may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net?s Guide to Childhood Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML). To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

Leukemia is a cancer of the blood. It begins when normal blood cells change and grow uncontrollably. Acute myeloid leukemia (AML) is a type of leukemia that is a cancer of the blood-forming tissue in the bone marrow. AML may also be called acute nonlymphocytic leukemia or acute myelogenous leukemia.

About bone marrow and blood cells

Bone marrow is the spongy, red tissue in the inner part of the large bones and is where a person?s blood cells are made. Normal immature blood cells are called blasts. Blasts mature into one of three different types of blood cells:

- White blood cells, which fight infection in the body
- Red blood cells, which carry oxygen and other nutrients throughout the body
- Platelets, which help the blood to clot

About AML

In AML, the bone marrow makes many abnormal cancerous cells, also called blasts or myeloblasts because they look similar to normal immature blast cells. Instead of becoming healthy mature blood cells, cancerous cells divide rapidly and uncontrollably. The cancerous cells are unable to mature and work like normal blast cells, and they do not die easily. Eventually, these myeloblasts fill up the bone marrow, preventing healthy cells from being made, and then build up in the bloodstream. They can also invade the lymph nodes, brain, skin, liver, kidneys, ovaries (in girls), testicles (in boys), and other organs. AML cells occasionally form a solid mass or tumor, called a chloroma.

Both children and adults can develop leukemia. This section is about AML that occurs in children, sometimes called pediatric AML. Learn more about AML in adults [3].

Looking for More of an Overview?

If you would like additional introductory information, explore these related items. Please note these links will take you to other sections on Cancer.Net:

- *ASCO Answers Fact Sheet [4]*: Read a one-page fact sheet (available in PDF) that offers an easy-to-print introduction to this type of cancer.
- Cancer.Net Patient Education Videos: View short videos led by ASCO experts in childhood cancer [5] and leukemia [6] that provide basic information and areas of research.
- Cancer.Net En Español [7]: Read about childhood AML in Spanish. Infórmase sobre la leucemia mieloide aguda infantil en español [7].

To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/leukemia-acute-myeloid-aml-childhood/overview
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/19065
[4] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_aml_childhood.pdf
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/27386
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/27376
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/18247