

## **Osteosarcoma - Childhood - Overview** [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2014

**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 Osteosarcoma. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

### **About sarcoma**

Sarcoma is cancer that develops in the tissues that support and connect parts of the body, including bone, fat, muscle, and soft tissue. Cancer begins when normal cells change and grow uncontrollably, forming a mass called a tumor. A tumor can be cancerous or benign. A cancerous tumor is malignant, meaning it can spread to other parts of the body. A benign tumor means the tumor will not spread.

### **About osteosarcoma**

Osteosarcoma is a cancer of the bone that destroys tissue and weakens the bone. Osteosarcoma develops from immature bone cells that normally form new bone tissue. Osteosarcoma most often starts in the bones around the knee joint, either at the lower end of the thigh bone (femur) or at the upper end of the shin bone (tibia). The next most common place osteosarcoma begins is in the humerus, the upper arm bone close to the shoulder. However, osteosarcoma can develop in any bone in the body. Rarely, it can also occur as a tumor in the soft tissue of the body, outside the bone.

Osteosarcoma is described as either a medullary tumor, also called a central tumor, or a peripheral tumor, also called a surface tumor. Each has different subtypes. The type and subtype of osteosarcoma is determined by looking at the tumor cells through a microscope. The most common subtype is called conventional central osteosarcoma. The other subtypes are much less common, each accounting for less than 5% of all osteosarcomas.

Medullary osteosarcoma subtypes include:

- Conventional central osteosarcoma
- Telangiectatic osteosarcoma
- Intraosseous well-differentiated, or low-grade, osteosarcoma

- Small cell osteosarcoma

Peripheral osteosarcoma subtypes include:

- Parosteal (juxtacortical) well-differentiated, or low-grade, osteosarcoma
- Periosteal osteosarcoma that is low grade to intermediate grade
- High-grade surface osteosarcoma

This section covers osteosarcoma that is diagnosed during childhood. To learn more about other types of [bone cancer](#) [3] and [soft-tissue sarcoma](#) [4], visit their specific sections on Cancer.Net.

### **Looking for More of an Overview?**

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

- [ASCO Answers Fact Sheet](#) [5]: Read a one-page fact sheet, available as a PDF, that offers an easy-to-print introduction to this type of cancer.
- [Cancer.Net Patient Education Video](#) [6]: View a short video led by an ASCO expert in childhood cancer that provides basic information and areas of research.

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

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#### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/osteosarcoma-childhood/overview>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31329>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31379>

[5] [http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/vignette/ASCO\\_Answers\\_Osteosarcoma\\_Childhood.pdf](http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/vignette/ASCO_Answers_Osteosarcoma_Childhood.pdf)

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27386>