

[Retinoblastoma - Childhood - Overview](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

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

Cancer begins when healthy 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.

Retinoblastoma is a rare cancer that begins in the part of the eye called the retina. The retina is a thin layer of nerve tissue that coats the back of the eye and enables the eye to see. Most often, retinoblastoma is unilateral, meaning it occurs only in one eye. However, it may be present in both eyes, called bilateral. If retinoblastoma spreads, it can spread to the lymph nodes, bones, or the bone marrow (the soft, spongy-like material found inside large bones). Rarely, it involves the central nervous system (CNS; brain and spinal cord).

Children may be born with retinoblastoma, but the disease is rarely diagnosed at birth. Most children who begin treatment before the retinoblastoma has spread beyond the eye are cured. An important goal of treatment in children with retinoblastoma is preserving vision.

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](#) [3]: 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 Videos: View short videos on [childhood cancer treatment](#) [4] and [childhood cancer survivorship](#) [5].

The [next section in this guide is Statistics](#) [6] and it helps explain how many people are diagnosed with this disease and general survival rates. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

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

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

[3] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_retinoblastoma_childhood.pdf

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

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27151>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19577>