Retinoblastoma - Childhood - After Treatment

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After Treatment

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about your child?s medical care after cancer treatment is finished and why this follow-up care is important. To see other pages in this guide, use the colored boxes on the right side of your screen, or click ?Next? at the bottom.

After treatment for retinoblastoma ends, talk with your child?s doctor about developing a follow-up care plan. This plan may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your child?s recovery for the coming months and years. All children treated for cancer, including retinoblastoma, should have life-long, follow-up care.

At first, follow-up visits will focus on making sure the cancer is gone and hasn?t returned. Once a child has been free of retinoblastoma for two to four years after treatment, and is considered cured, the emphasis during periodic follow-up visits changes. Pediatric oncologists will focus on the quality of the child?s life, including developmental and emotional concerns.

If enucleation took place, most young children adapt well to the loss of one eye. Rarely, both eyes will need to be removed to save the child?s life. If both eyes are removed, the local educational system is required to provide special services. Parents are encouraged to investigate the school?s services and advocate on their child?s behalf. Other rehabilitation [2] services may also be needed to help the child cope with the vision loss.

Based on the type of treatment your child received and whether the child has the genetic form of retinoblastoma, the doctor will determine what evaluations are needed to check for long-term effects. This may include imaging studies (CT scan or MRI) and blood tests. Counseling will also be provided for children who have an increased risk of additional tumors later in life, such as those with retinoblastoma in both eyes and those with retinoblastoma in one eye who have a family history of the disease. Yearly visits to specialized ophthalmologic and medical oncologists are necessary in order to fully monitor the child?s recovery and to find any secondary cancer in its earliest stages. Follow-up care should also address any developmental or emotional concerns. Learn more about childhood cancer survivorship [3].

The child?s family is encouraged to organize and keep a record of the child?s medical information. That way, as the child enters adulthood, he or she has a clear, written history of the diagnosis, the treatment given, and the doctor?s recommendations about the schedule for follow-up care. The doctor?s office can help you create this. This information will be valuable to doctors who care for your child during his or her lifetime. ASCO offers cancer treatment summary forms [4] to help keep track of the cancer treatment your child received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed.

Children who have had cancer can also enhance the quality of their future by following established guidelines for good health into and through adulthood, including not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and participating in regular physical activity. Talk with the doctor about developing a plan that is best for your child?s needs. Learn more about the next steps to take in survivorship [5].

To continue reading this guide, choose ?Next? (below, right) with a list of questions you may want to ask your child?s doctor. Or, use the colored boxes located on the right side of your screen to visit any section.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/25397
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/25395
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/25394
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/25400