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Adolescents and Young Adults With Leukemia Have Lower Survival Rates and Higher Rates of Recurrence Than Younger Patients [1]

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In a new study on a type of leukemia called high-risk B-precursor acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), researchers found that adolescents and young adults (ages 16 to 30) were more likely to have the disease recur (come back after treatment) and more likely to die from the disease than younger patients. Adolescents and young adults (often shortened to AYA) with cancer make up a unique group of patients with different medical, social, and emotional needs than both younger and older patients. The results of this study highlight the importance of finding new ways to treat leukemia and lower the side effects of treatment for these patients.

This study included 501 adolescents and young adults who were part of a [larger study that tested four different treatment regimens \(schedules\) for this type of ALL](#) [2]. Among the adolescents and young adults, researchers found that 68% had no signs of leukemia after five years, compared with about 81% of the younger patients. In addition, nearly 80% of the adolescents and young adults were alive after five years, compared with about 88% of the younger patients.

The researchers also found that the adolescents and young adults participating in this study were more likely to have the disease recur. About 21% of the adolescent and young adult patients had the disease come back after treatment, compared with about 13% of the younger

patients. Adolescents and young adults were also more likely to die from severe side effects than younger patients.

What this means for patients

“This study tells us that the poorer outcome for AYA patients is from more resistant disease, resulting in higher rates of recurrence and higher side effects from treatment,” said lead author Eric Larsen, MD, Medical Director of the Maine Children's Cancer Program and Study Chair of the Children's Oncology Group protocol AALL0232. “We have to find new treatments to better treat the leukemia, but while we want to intensify therapy, we also have to reduce the side effects.” If you or your child or teen has been diagnosed with leukemia, talk with the doctor about the current treatments available, as well as the expected side effects and how they can be managed.

Questions to Ask the Doctor

- What type of leukemia has been diagnosed?
- What is the prognosis (chance of recovery)?
- What are the treatment options?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What are the possible side effects of treatment? How can they be managed?
- What is the risk of recurrence?

For More Information

[Guide to ALL](#) [3]

[Guide to Childhood ALL](#) [4]

[Cancer.Net Video: Adolescents and Young Adults with Cancer, with Melissa Hudson, MD](#) [5]

[Cancer in Teens](#) [6]

[Cancer in Young Adults](#) [7]

[Moving Forward: Perspectives from Survivors and Doctors](#) [8]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/adolescents-and-young-adults-leukemia-have-lower-survival-rates-and-higher-rates-recurrence-younger>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+News+and+Meetings/ASCO+Annual+Meetings/Research+Summaries/Leukemia/New+Chemotherapy+Regimen+Reduces+Recurrence+of+ALL+for+Children+and+Young+Adults>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Leukemia+-+Acute+Lymphocytic+-+ALL>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types/Leukemia+-+Acute+Lymphoblastic+-+ALL+-+Childhood>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Multimedia/Cancer.Net+Videos/Cancer+Basics/Adolescents+and+Young+Adults+with+Cancer%2C+with+Melissa+Hudson%2C+MD>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Young+Adults>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/patient/Multimedia/Cancer.Net+Videos/For+Young+Adults+with+Cancer>