

Things to Know About Cancer [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 07/2014

Key Messages:

- Teens can develop common childhood and adult cancers, but they need different medical, social and emotional support than either children or adults.
- For many teens, learning about the type of cancer they have and their treatment options helps them feel more in control and less anxious.
- Most teens receive treatment in specialized cancer centers, and many receive treatment through clinical trials.

Cancer in teens is rare. Teens can develop cancers commonly seen in children, as well as those more common for adults, such as melanoma, testicular cancer, and ovarian cancer. However, doctors have found that teenagers have special medical, social, and emotional needs that are different from younger children and adults with cancer.

Below are the most common types of cancer in teens, ages 15 to 19. For more information on each type, select a name below.

- [Hodgkin lymphoma](#) [3] (16%) and [non-Hodgkin lymphoma](#) [4] (8%)
- [Germ cell tumors](#) [5], including [testicular cancer](#) [6] and [ovarian cancer](#) [7] (16%)
- [Central nervous system \(CNS\) tumors](#) [8] (10%)
- [Thyroid cancer](#) [9] (7%)
- [Melanoma](#) [10] (7%)
- [Acute lymphoblastic leukemia \(ALL\)](#) [11] (6%)
- [Soft tissue sarcoma](#) [12] (7%)
- [Osteosarcoma](#) [13] (5%)
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#) [14] (5%)
- [Ewing sarcoma](#) [15] (2%)
- [Other cancers](#) [16] (12%)

Learning about cancer

Finding out more information about cancer and knowing what to expect during treatment may help some teens feel more in control and less anxious. Here are some ways to find cancer information:

- Go to one of the many sites about cancer available online, including those written for teens. Just remember that not everything you read on the Internet is reliable and up-to-date. Ask your doctor or nurse to recommend some good websites or [find other resources for teens with cancer](#) [17].
- Ask your doctor to give you information written for patients.
- Get in touch with support groups of other teenagers who are going through or have recovered from the same cancer as you.
- Go to a public library and ask the librarian to help you find information about your type of cancer.
- Speak up during your doctor's appointments and [ask questions](#) [18]. Becoming involved in your care helps you feel in control of the situation. Talk about the cancer and treatment with your parents and doctor so you can fully understand.

There is a lot of information available about cancer, so don't feel like you have to read everything right away. Talk about the information you find online with your doctor.

Finding a cancer specialist and treatment center

Most often, teens with cancer receive treatment at specialized cancer centers where different types of doctors work together to plan treatment. These doctors may include medical oncologists, who specialize in treating cancer with medication, and pediatric oncologists, who treat children with cancer. Your current doctor or nurse may also help you and your parents find a pediatric oncologist or a medical oncologist who specializes in adolescent and young adult oncology. Learn more about [choosing a treatment facility](#) [19].

Understanding your treatment options

Cancer is treated in many different ways, depending on the type and location of the cancer and whether it has spread. Your oncologist will work with you and your parents to come up with a treatment plan, including the types of treatment you will have and how long treatment may last. Being prepared and knowing what to expect is an important step in the treatment planning process.

Many teens who have cancer receive treatment as part of a clinical trial. A clinical trial is a research study to test a new approach to treatment to evaluate whether it is safe, effective, and possibly better than the standard treatment. Clinical trials may test such approaches as a new drug, a new combination of standard treatments, or new doses of current therapies.

If you are younger than 18, your parents must legally give consent for you to participate in a clinical trial. However, you will also be asked to give informed assent. When you give informed assent, it means that you understand what will happen in the study and that you agree to participate. Ask your doctor or nurse to find out if there are clinical trials for you. Or, you can check www.clinicaltrials.gov [20] or www.curesearch.org [21]. Learn more about [clinical trials](#) [22] and [how cancer is treated](#) [23].

More Information

[Guide to Childhood Cancer \[24\]](#)

[For Teens \[25\]](#)

Additional Resources

[Teens Health: Cancer Center \[26\]](#)

[Teens Living with Cancer \[27\]](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/teens/things-know-about-cancer>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19178>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19207>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18883>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19659>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19481>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18660>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19293>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19251>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19023>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19604>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19467>

[14] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19065>

[15] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18797>

[16] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types>

[17] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25142>

[18] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25138>

[19] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24527>

[20] <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>

[21] <http://www.curesearch.org/>

[22] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24863>

[23] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25071>

[24] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31318>

[25] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25116>

[26] http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/cancer_center.html#cat20153

[27] <http://www.teenslivingwithcancer.org/>