

ASCO answers

Wilms Tumor

What is a Wilms tumor?

Wilms tumor is a type of cancer that begins in a child's kidneys. The cancer occurs when immature kidney cells grow out of control and form a mass called a tumor. Although Wilms tumor can develop in both kidneys, it usually only affects 1. Wilms tumor is often found before it spreads to other parts of the body. It is most common in children age 5 and younger.

What is the function of the kidneys?

The kidneys are bean-shaped organs located above the waist on each side of the spine. They filter blood and remove impurities, excess minerals and salts, and extra water to produce urine. These organs also produce hormones that help control blood pressure, red blood cell production, and other bodily functions.

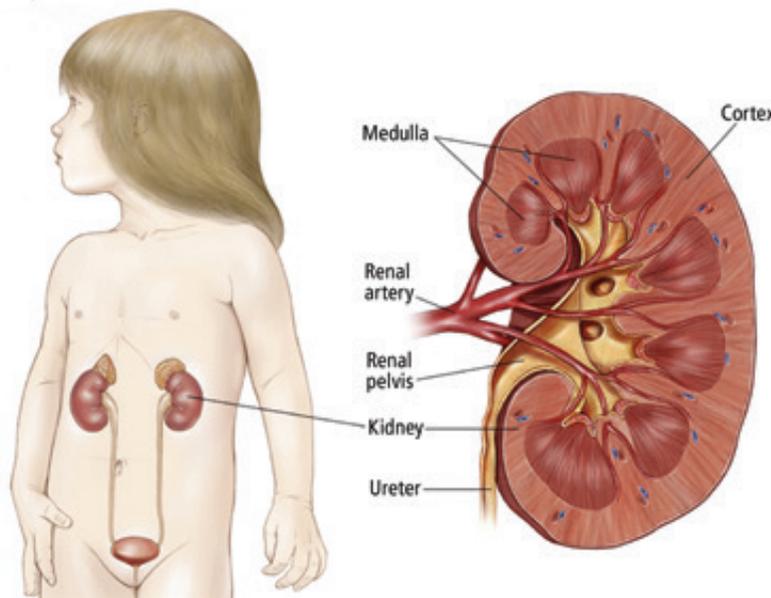


ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT MORREALE/VISUAL EXPLANATIONS, LLC © 2004 AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

What does stage mean?

The stage is a way of describing where the tumor is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. There are 5 stages for Wilms tumor: stages I through V (1 through 5). The tumor is also classified by its histology, which is what the cells look like under a microscope. The histology can be described as favorable or anaplastic. Find more information about these stages at www.cancer.net/wilms.

How is a Wilms tumor treated?

The treatment of a Wilms tumor depends on the size, location, and histology of the tumor; whether the cancer has spread; and the child's overall health. Surgery is common for all stages of Wilms tumor. During surgery, the doctor will either remove the entire kidney, along with some surrounding healthy tissue and nearby lymph nodes, or the tumor and part of the kidney. When 1 kidney is removed, the other kidney takes over the full job of filtering waste from the body. Chemotherapy may be given after surgery to eliminate any remaining cancer cells. Sometimes, chemotherapy is given before surgery to shrink a tumor that is too large to remove or a tumor that is growing into blood vessels or other organs. Radiation therapy is usually used to treat stage III and IV Wilms tumors with a favorable histology and all tumors with anaplastic histology.

When making treatment decisions, consider a clinical trial. Most children with cancer are treated as part of one. Talk with your child's doctor about all treatment options. The side effects of Wilms tumor treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your child's health care team. This is called palliative care and is an important part of the overall treatment plan.

How can I help my child cope with Wilms tumor?

Helping your child understand a cancer diagnosis is a key part of the coping process. Children with cancer should be treated at a pediatric cancer center. These centers not only provide access to the latest treatments, but they also offer age-appropriate programs for social and emotional needs. Encouraging your child and other family members to share their emotions can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

Questions to ask the doctor

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your child's health care. Consider asking the following questions of your child's doctors:

- What is the stage and histology of the tumor? What does this mean?
- Can you explain my child's pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Would you explain my child's treatment options?
- What clinical trials are available for my child? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend for my child? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help my child feel better, or both?
- Who will be part of the treatment team, and what does each member do?
- How will this treatment affect my child's daily life? Will he or she be able to go to school and perform his or her usual activities?
- What short-term and long-term side effects may be associated with my child's treatment?
- What are the chances that the tumor will come back after treatment?
- What follow-up tests will my child need, and how often will he or she need them?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs of cancer care, who can help me?
- Where can I find emotional support for my child? For my family?
- Whom should I call with questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at www.cancer.net/wilms.

The ideas and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) or The Conquer Cancer Foundation. The information in this fact sheet is not intended as medical or legal advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a physician or other licensed health care provider. Patients with health care-related questions should call or see their physician or other health care provider promptly and should not disregard professional medical advice, or delay seeking it, because of information encountered here. The mention of any product, service, or treatment in this fact sheet should not be construed as an ASCO endorsement. ASCO is not responsible for any injury or damage to persons or property arising out of or related to any use of ASCO's patient education materials, or to any errors or omissions.



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

2318 Mill Road, Suite 800, Alexandria, VA 22314 | Toll Free: 888-651-3038 | Phone: 571-483-1300

www.asco.org | www.cancer.net | www.conquercancerfoundation.org

© 2017 American Society of Clinical Oncology. For permissions information, contact permissions@asco.org.

TERMS TO KNOW

Biopsy:

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

Chemotherapy:

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

Clinical trial:

A research study that tests a new treatment or drug

Lymph node:

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

Metastasis:

The spread of cancer from where it began to another part of the body

Partial nephrectomy:

Surgery to remove a portion of the kidney and usually some tissue surrounding a kidney tumor

Pediatric oncologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating cancer in children and teens

Pediatric urologist:

A doctor who specializes in treating urinary tract issues in children and teens

Prognosis:

Chance of recovery

Radiation therapy:

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

Radical nephrectomy:

Surgery to remove the entire kidney

Tumor:

An abnormal growth of body tissue

MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH



of the American Society of Clinical Oncology