

International Childhood Cancer Day



Every year, cancer affects more than 400,000 children and adolescents under 20 years of age. According to the World Health Organisation, 80% of people survive in high-income countries, while only 20% survive in low and middle-income countries.

By 2030, the Global Childhood Cancer Initiative aims to eliminate all pain and suffering from childhood cancer and achieve a survival rate of at least 60%, for all children diagnosed with cancer around the world.

What is International Childhood Cancer Day?

The **International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD)** aims to increase awareness and promote deeper understanding of the challenges faced by children and adolescents with cancer, the survivors and their families. The ICCD highlights the need for equitable access to treatment and care for every child with cancer.

ICCD theme for 2022

'Better Survival' is achievable #throughyourhands - "The right care, at the right time, by the right team".



Cancer overview

Every cell in the body has a system that controls how it grows, how it interacts with other cells, and how long it lives. Sometimes, cells lose that control and grow in a way that the body can no longer control. This is called cancer.

There are different kinds of cancer, but they develop in the same way as the cells:

- Grow out of control
- Develop unusual sizes and shapes
- Move past their usual boundaries inside the body
- Destroy nearby cells

Screening for cancer in children

Cancer is uncommon in children but can happen. There are no widely recommended screening tests to look for cancer in children who are not at increased risk.

Some children have a higher chance of developing a specific type of cancer because of certain gene changes they inherit from a parent. These children may need careful, regular medical check-ups that include special tests to look for early signs of cancer.



The most common cancers children can get are:

- Leukaemia
- Brain and spinal cord tumours
- Neuroblastoma
- Wilms tumour (Nephroblastoma)
- Lymphoma (including both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin)
- Retinoblastoma
- Bone cancer (including osteosarcoma and Ewing sarcoma)

Risk factors and causes of childhood cancer

Many studies have been needed to identify the causes of childhood cancer, with very few caused by environmental or lifestyle factors. Furthermore, some chronic infections, such as HIV, Epstein-Barr virus, and malaria, are risk factors for childhood cancer.

Other infections can increase a child's risk of developing cancer as an adult, so it is important to be vaccinated (against hepatitis B to help prevent liver cancer and against human papillomavirus to help prevent cervical cancer) and to pursue other methods such as early detection and treatment of chronic infections that can lead to cancer.



Advice for parents



Here are some tips to lower your child's risk of getting cancer:

1. Stop smoking and don't allow anyone else to smoke around your kids.
2. Protect them from sunburns to prevent skin cancer.
3. Feed them a healthy diet with lots of fibre, fruits, and vegetables. Avoid processed meats and an overabundance of red meat and salt.
4. Encourage exercise. Exercise stabilises levels of hormones like oestrogen and insulin that have been linked to cancer.
5. Keep them at a healthy body weight. Fatty tissue produces hormones that influence the way cells grow.
6. Limit their exposure to chemicals.

Improving the outcome of childhood cancer through early diagnosis

The most effective strategies for reducing the burden of cancer in children and improving outcomes focus on rapid and accurate diagnosis, followed by effective and evidence-based treatment with coordinated, supportive care.

When identified early, cancer is more likely to respond to effective treatment and result in a greater probability of survival, less suffering and often less expensive and less intensive treatment.

Early detection of cancer and the avoidance of treatment delays can significantly improve the lives of children with cancer. Correct diagnosis is essential for the management of children with cancer, as each cancer requires specific treatment plans such as surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.

