



Spotting the signs and symptoms of childhood cancer

Childhood cancer is rare, but it does occur more frequently than most of us think. It may come as a surprise, but cancer is the biggest medical cause of death in children in the UK. Statistically, 1 in 500 children are diagnosed with cancer before they reach the age of 15. Every year, there are 4,000 children and young people diagnosed with cancer in the UK.

Despite this fact, few of us are aware of the signs and symptoms. The aim of these Top Tips is to make you aware of what to look for in your child to enable affected children to be diagnosed early. Early diagnosis of childhood cancer saves lives.

Please remember, if your child has one or two of these symptoms, it does not mean that they have cancer. Simply it means that they need to be seen by a doctor and reviewed to rule out the problem, along with other more likely diagnoses.

CHILDHOOD CANCER : THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Loss of weight, sickness or nausea

Apppearance: your child looks pale or has a swollen tummy

Discomfort: pain (anywhere) that is persistent, or a new limp

You are concerned
(Very important)

Bleeding, excess bruising, or blood in the urine

Swelling or a lump that is persistent

Disturbances in vision, a new squint, headaches or an unusual white appearance of pupils (eyes) in photos

Recurrent high temperatures or night sweats

Irritability or constant exhaustion

Think: **LADYBIRDS**

If your child has any of these symptoms or **YOU ARE WORRIED**, please get them reviewed by the GP. Most of the time, the cause of these symptoms will not be cancer. If it is cancer however, **early diagnosis can save lives.**

Grace Kelly Ladybird Trust
For childhood cancer awareness and research into solid tumours in children and young people
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For additional fact sheets see www.ihv.org.uk

The information on this Parents Tips sheet was correct on 25.5.17. © Institute of Health Visiting 2017

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Childhood cancer signs and symptoms, think LADYBIRDS.

- **Loss of weight, sickness or nausea.** If your child appears to have lost weight (and not rapidly regained it after an illness), or had sickness that lasts for more than a few days.
- **Appearance.** If your child has an unhealthy new pale appearance (pallor), an unusually swollen tummy, or constipation that is not improving with simple treatments that have been suggested by your health visitor or GP.
- **Discomfort.** Children with pain that is not improving after a few days or keeps returning or a new limp. Pain should not normally wake a child up from sleep.
- **You are concerned.** This is so important. You know your child better than anyone, and if you remain concerned, please see a doctor.
- **Blood in urine, bleeding or widespread bruising.** Unusual bruising or bleeding such as frequent nosebleeds may be a sign something is wrong. Blood in the urine can appear bright red or more of a brown (cola) colour, and if seen, this needs urgent medical review.
- **Irritability or exhaustion.** If your child constantly appears exhausted (out of proportion with their level of activity) or appears to have become more angry or irritable over a period of time (personality change) more than you would expect for the age of your child.
- **Recurrent viral illnesses.** All children get colds and high temperatures, sometimes one immediately after another. This is normal, so when should we worry? If a child seems to have constant back to back viral illnesses with no break, night sweats or recurrent high temperatures with no obvious accompanying illness, it is a good idea to get them checked.
- **Disturbances in vision.** Changes in vision or severe or worsening headaches, especially in the morning or if accompanied by vomiting need reviewing. Babies and young children who have an unusual white appearance of one or both of their eyes on more than one occasion (such as in photographs).

- **Swelling or lumps.** Small swellings or enlarged lymph nodes are common in children after viral illnesses, but they would usually be expected to resolve within 1 to 2 weeks. If they remain past this point, it is best for them to be checked.
- **If your child, or a child you know, is suffering from any of the symptoms described, or other symptoms you are concerned about, see your GP. Explain your concerns and remember that there are a lot of other possible diagnoses too. The symptoms are most likely to be due to a normal childhood complaint, but in the unlikely chance it is cancer, early diagnosis can save lives.**

Important

- If your child has symptoms that are not improving and you have seen the GP (or another health professional) on more than 2 occasions, make sure you voice your worries. This is especially important if you have seen a different person on each occasion or are concerned something has been overlooked.
- If you feel your concerns are not addressed, please keep trying and seek advice from an alternative source, such as asking for a second opinion if necessary. This is rarely needed if you talk to the original clinician about your concerns, but remember, you as a parent know your child the best when something is not right, so do not be afraid to ask again.

Please remember, your child's symptoms are most likely not due to cancer, but in the unlikely event, early diagnosis can save lives.

Additional Resources:

Further information on what to do if you are worried about childhood cancer is available on the Grace Kelly Ladybird Trust website:

<http://www.gracekellyladybird.co.uk/for-parents-and-non-clinicians>

The Children's Cancer and Leukaemia group website also features information and support links:

<http://www.cclg.org.uk/i-am-worried-my-child-has-cancer>

Child Cancer Helpline, Clic Sargent :
0300 330 0803