

Signs of Childhood Cancer

Dealing with childhood cancer is something no parent should have to go through. But understanding the warning signs of cancer could save your child's life. Parents, relatives, and health professionals often find cancers in children while they're still in the early stages. However, it can be challenging to recognize the seriousness of the illness right away, because many warning signs seem to be normal illnesses or injuries. Cancer is uncommon in children, but if your child exhibits any of the warning signs, it's better to be safe than sorry, so contact your doctor as soon as possible. Here are signs to watch for.

Easy Bruising

Easy bruising may be a sign a child has leukemia. Children with leukemia tend to bleed more than they should after nosebleeds or minor injuries. They also bruise quite easily, even from impacts that shouldn't leave bruises. It's also possible their skin will be dotted with tiny red spots, otherwise known as petechiae. These spots occur when tiny blood vessels underneath the skin are bleeding.

If your child is bruising more than usual, your first thought may be to worry about their safety, such as fixing potential hazards in their room or the backyard.

However, you also need to worry about their health. For blood to clot correctly, it needs to have healthy platelets, and leukemia lowers the platelets in the blood. As such, it's essential to get in contact with your doctor and order a blood test, which will analyze the child's platelet count and should offer an explanation.

Vision Changes

If a child experiences sudden vision changes, this might be a sign they have retinoblastoma, which occurs almost exclusively in younger children. They are typically detected when a health professional, parent, or other adult realizes the child's eye looks strange. The earliest and most common sign of this cancer is the white pupillary reflex. When a person shines a light into your eyes, the pupil should look red due to the blood vessels found within the eye. However, in children with retinoblastoma, the pupil will seem to be pink or white instead.

Children might have lazy eyes, a condition in which both eyes fail to look in the same direction, but this is not always a sign of cancer. In most cases, lazy eyes are caused by weakness in the eye muscles, but retinoblastoma can also cause this phenomenon.

Unexplained Illness or Fever

Most of the time, an unexplained illness or fever will be some strain of the flu. Nausea and vomiting might be caused by other external factors as well, like unexpected motion and food poisoning. However, if a child has a sickness or fever that doesn't subside within a few days, contact their doctor as soon as possible. If the fever is particularly high, however, don't wait.

Fevers occur when a person's immune system is fighting off an infection. The immune system raises the body temperature as it attacks the source of the infection. In healthy children, the sickness runs its course, and the body returns to normal. However, children with cancer need more help than their immune system can give them, especially if it compromises their immune system.

Frequent Headaches And Vomiting

Frequent headaches and vomiting can be a sign something is wrong with a child's body. It is unusual for a child to experience headaches so severe that they throw up. If your child is experiencing these symptoms, be sure to contact a doctor. It's very likely the cause is non-cancerous, but migraines and other headache-related illnesses should still receive proper medical treatment.

Headaches don't necessarily mean cancer is in the brain. They can be a sign of brain tumors, but other cancers might also cause them. Leukemia makes children bleed, which can cause complications in the brain. A lack of oxygen can also lead to severe headaches.

Paleness and Lethargy

Children are supposed to lead active lifestyles. They're constantly growing and changing, evolving into new individuals, and as such, it's not normal for them to be constantly tired and unenthusiastic about life. Paleness and lethargic behavior could be signs of childhood cancer, but they can also be signs of other issues. If a child is too lethargic to enjoy their childhood, some kind of medical treatment might be necessary.

Lethargy might be caused by the body fighting cancer or by any number of physical illnesses that cause fatigue and respiratory issues. You'll even see this symptom with severe cases of childhood depression and other mental illnesses. If you suspect something might be wrong with your child's body, the best thing you can do is take them to a doctor who can evaluate the situation accurately.

