



# WHAT IS LEUKEMIA?



## ABOUT LEUKEMIA

Leukemia is a cancer affecting the blood. It's a cancer of the tissues where your blood is formed, like bone marrow and the lymphatic system. Leukemia causes the rapid growth of abnormal blood cells. It usually affects white blood cells, which are powerful infection fighters.

People who are exposed to high levels of radiation and the chemical benzene are more likely to get certain types of leukemia, as are smokers, people who have had chemotherapy and people with certain inherited diseases and blood disorders.

### TYPES OF LEUKEMIA

There are many types of leukemia. Doctors classify leukemias according to where they occur – in the bone marrow (**myeloid**) or in the lymphatic system (**lymphoid**), and how fast they grow – acute leukemias develop faster, and chronic leukemias develop more slowly. Symptoms vary according to the type of leukemia.

### TREATMENT & SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT

Your treatment regime will depend on what type of leukemia you have, as well as your age and health. Make every effort to fully understand your diagnosis, the treatment options available and how they will impact your life. Knowledge about the cancer, the treatment and the side effects help you to work with your health care team to manage your quality of life during and after treatment.

**Keep in mind that everyone reacts differently to treatment.**

### TIPS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Once you've learned your diagnosis, you will be able to work with your health care team to make thoughtful decisions about your care.

### FOR BEST RESULTS:

- Write down your questions before each doctor's visit. Make notes so you remember the answers.
- Talk about how you are feeling and any symptoms or concerns you have.
- Ask about side effects and which ones you need to know about and report to your team.
- Ask about ways to manage side effects.
- Ask about the latest information from clinical trials.
- Ask questions until you understand what is being said.
- Ask for information in your home language or as a drawing if you need it.
- Take someone with you to appointments, for support and an extra set of eyes and ears.
- Talk to your health care team about ways to manage treatment costs.
- It's very important to take your medicine as prescribed. Let your health care team know if you have missed doses of therapy. Also, let them know if certain side effects make you miss or skip doses.
- If you don't feel your health care team is addressing your concerns, consider getting a second opinion.

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@campaign4cancer    
CALL US ON: 082 224 4224  
EMAIL US AT: info@campaign4cancer.co.za



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