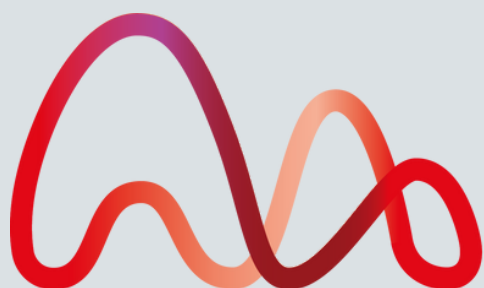
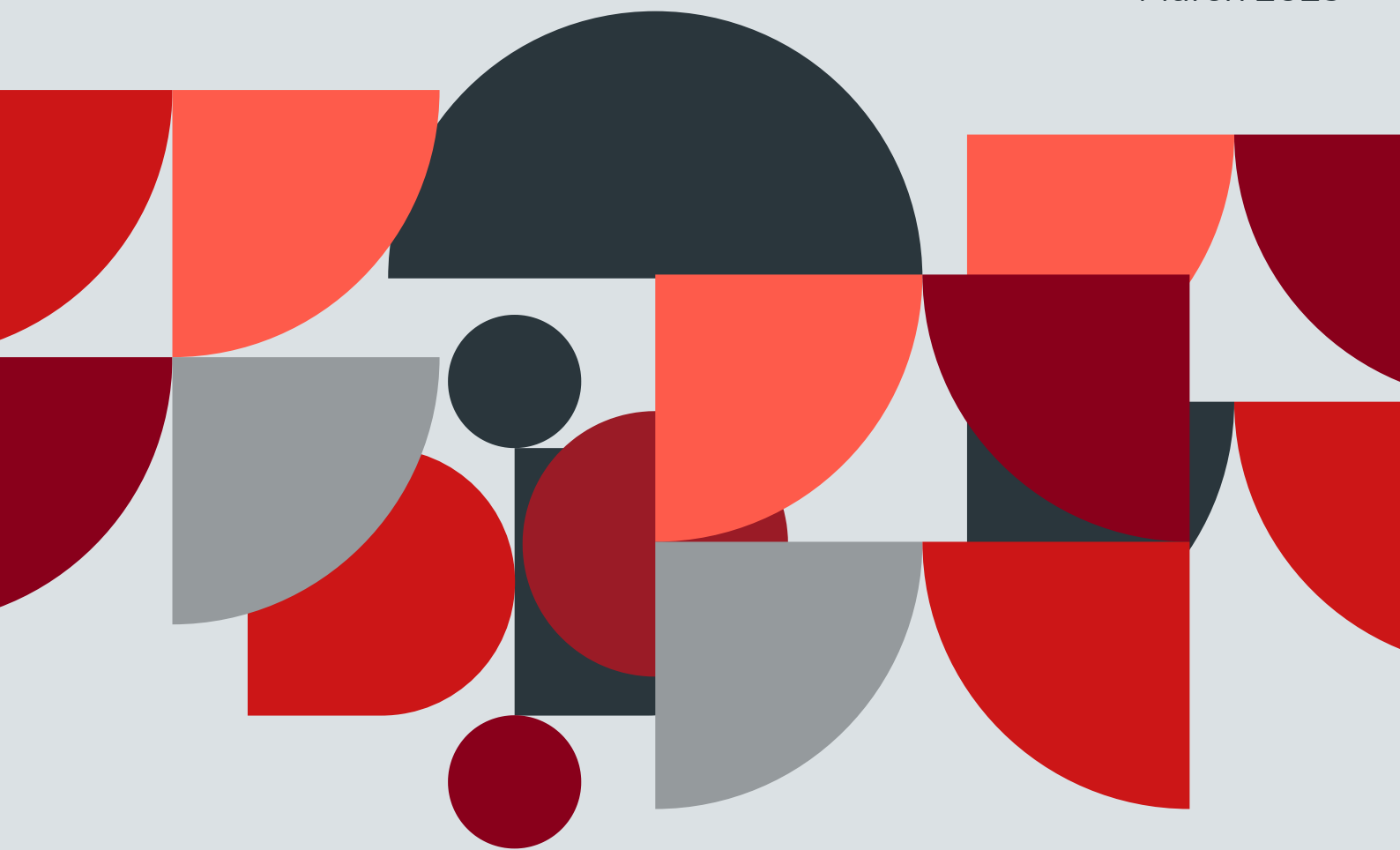


# FITNESS ASSESSMENT IN ACUTE MYELOID LEUKEMIA

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AN EXPERT PANEL ON  
BEHALF OF EUROPEAN LEUKEMIA NET

For Patient and Caregivers

March 2025



ALAN

Acute Leukaemia Advocates Network

# Summary

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# Introduction

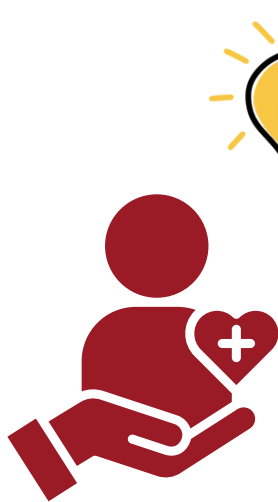
1

Many factors can affect how well different treatments work for each person.

With new therapies available, doctors need to carefully **weigh the risks and benefits of each treatment option.**



However, because **each person is unique** – with different health conditions, genetic traits, and personal circumstances – **there isn't a single test that determines the best treatment** for each person.



Beyond medical factors, a patient's **quality of life, personal preferences, ability to manage daily activities, social support, and access to palliative care** should also play a role in these decisions.

# Introduction

1

To help with this, doctors use "**fitness assessments**" to evaluate a patient's health and find the most suitable treatment.

These assessments consider **multiple factors**, but there is **no universal agreement** on how they should be defined or which specific factors matter most.



To improve this process, a **group of international experts from the European LeukemiaNet (ELN)**, worked together to develop clear recommendations.



This group included **31 hematologists** with expertise in AML, geriatrics, and quality of life assessment.



**Patient representatives** from the **Acute Leukemia Advocates Network (ALAN)** were also involved, ensuring that these recommendations reflect not just medical expertise, but also the **real-life experiences and needs of patients**.

# General definitions



# General definitions

2

## Summary

1

**Fitness refers to how doctors assess a person's overall health. This should include factors like your age, general health, any other health conditions, and how well you can manage everyday tasks.**



Before starting treatment for AML, doctors should assess **multiple factors** to determine the best treatments options. This helps make sure the treatment is **safe and appropriate for you or someone you love.**

2

**Your fitness level should help determine the intensity of the treatment you receive.**



Doctors should assess your **overall health** and **specific biological factors** to determine the best treatment for you or someone you love.



You should receive a **clear explanation** of why a particular treatment is recommended, as well as **other possible options**, so you can make informed decisions.

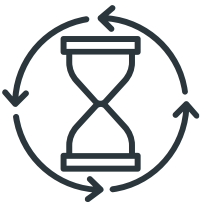
# General definitions

## 2

### Summary

3

**Just because you are eligible for more intensive treatments doesn't automatically mean you are eligible for a stem cell transplant.**



Your doctors should **reassess your health before each step of your treatment**, including before receiving a stem cell transplant, to ensure that the plan is still right for you.

4

**If intensive treatment isn't an option for you, you may still be eligible for a transplant if you respond well to a less intensive treatment and reach remission.**



If your **leukemia is under control after less intensive treatment**, a transplant may still be an option.

5

**Even when curing AML is not considered possible, active treatment can still help manage symptoms, improve comfort, and extend life compared to supportive care alone.**



The treatment decisions should focus on **what matters most to you**, like maintaining your quality of life.

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

1

**Fitness refers to how doctors assess a person's overall health. This should include factors like your age, general health, any other health conditions, and how well you can manage everyday tasks.**

Doctors should assess some important factors to determine the best treatment plan, such as:



- **Age**
- **Existing medical conditions**
- **Overall physical strength**
- How **independent** someone is in daily life
- **Memory, mood, and mental well-being**
- **Nutrition** and the risks of weight loss
- **Medications** someone is taking
- **Support** from family and caregivers



Studies show that **older adults in good health can sometimes do better with treatment** than younger people who have more health problems.

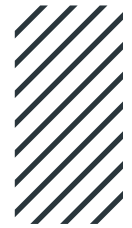
## Expert Recommendation



Before starting treatment for AML, **doctors should assess multiple factors** to determine the best treatments options.

A thorough, personalized evaluation helps ensure that the **treatment plan is suited to your specific needs and abilities.**

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

2

**Your fitness level should help determine the intensity of the treatment you receive.**

Current treatments for AML are divided into two main types:



### Intensive treatments

These often include a combination of **chemotherapy** drugs like cytarabine and anthracycline (known as “7+3”), and sometimes additional drugs like gemtuzumab ozogamicin, midostaurin or targeted agents.



### Low-intensity treatments

These are **easier for the body to manage** and might include drugs like HMA, venetoclax with HMA or low-dose cytarabine, or other targeted therapies such as ivosidenib or enasidenib.

The choice of treatment can depend on **your unique genetic traits** and **any changes in your leukemia cells**.



Some changes in your genes, especially in older patients, can make chemotherapy less effective.

If your leukemia is more aggressive or related to past health issues, stronger treatments may not work as well.

## Expert Recommendation



Since there are treatments with different levels of intensity, your doctor should recommend a **plan based on your overall health and other key factors**, including genetic traits.

Doctors should clearly **explain why** a certain treatment is recommended and **provide other options** if needed.

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS

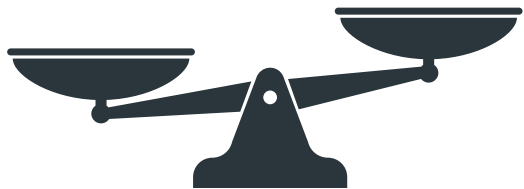


## Extended

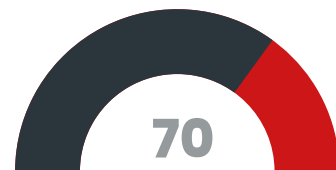
3

**Just because you are eligible for more intensive treatments doesn't automatically mean you are eligible for a stem cell transplant.**

A **stem cell transplant can be a key part of curing AML by lowering the risk of leukemia coming back** compared to chemotherapy alone, but it also comes with serious risks, including **life-threatening complications.**



Since **there is no strict age limit for this procedure**, doctors use special tools to assess whether a patient is likely to benefit from it.



**For those over 70**, a special health check can help determine if the transplant is a suitable option.



However, a patient's health can change during treatment – some may no longer meet the criteria for a transplant, while others may improve and become eligible.



## Expert Recommendation



Because your health can change during treatment, doctors should **check your overall condition before each phase of treatment**, including before a stem cell transplant

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS

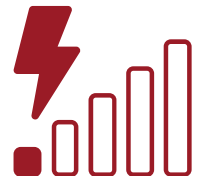


## Extended

4

**If intensive treatment isn't an option for you, you may still be eligible for a transplant if you respond well to a less intensive treatment and reach remission.**

Typically, transplants are offered after standard chemotherapy, but they **have also been successful in patients whose leukemia is under control or no longer detectable with less intensive treatments.**



While these less intensive treatments are not yet the standard approach, **they may help some patients prepare for a transplant while avoiding strong side effects.**

## Expert Recommendation



Not being eligible for intensive chemotherapy does not mean you cannot have a stem cell transplant.

If your leukemia is under control after less intensive treatment, a **transplant may still be an option.**

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

5

**Even when curing AML is not considered possible, active treatment can still help manage symptoms, improve comfort, and extend life compared to supportive care alone.**

There can be two main treatment approaches:

### Active treatment

Includes medications that directly reduce the leukemia.

These treatments, like azacitidine and venetoclax-based therapies, have been shown to help patients live longer while preserving their quality of life

### Supportive care only

Focuses on relieving symptoms without trying to slow the disease.

This may include blood transfusions, antibiotics, and pain management to improve comfort but does not directly treat AML.



Any treatment that targets leukemia can **improve survival and reduce the risk of early death**, making it a **better option than just supportive care**, even with potential side effects.

## Expert Recommendation



Even if a cure isn't possible, treatments to manage leukemia symptoms should still be considered to improve quality of life.

These decisions should take into account what's important to you, including **your preferences and goals** for your care.

# Components of fitness



# Components of fitness

3

## Summary

6

**Age alone shouldn't decide what treatment is right for you or someone you love.**



**Just because someone is older doesn't mean they can't handle certain treatments.** Doctors should look at your overall health and not just your age when making decisions about treatment.

7

**If you're over 75, doctors should carefully consider if intensive treatment is right for you.**

For people over 75, doctors should carefully evaluate whether intensive treatments are the best choice. **Each person's health is different**, so doctors should evaluate your situation closely.



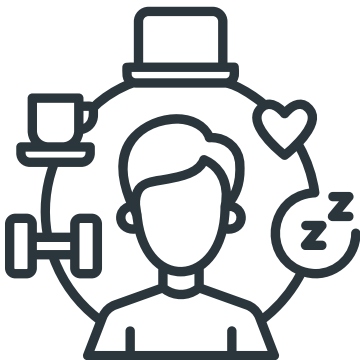
# Components of fitness

3

## Summary

8

**Your ability to perform daily activities should be an important factor in deciding the right treatment for you.**



Your general health — **how well you feel** and **how easily you can do everyday tasks** — should help doctors decide what treatments would be the safest and most effective for you.

9

**Your own report of your physical abilities, social life, and quality of life before getting sick should be an important factor in assessing your overall health and treatment options.**

How you felt physically and socially before your illness is important.

**Sharing this helps doctors understand your usual health** and choose the treatment that best fits your needs.



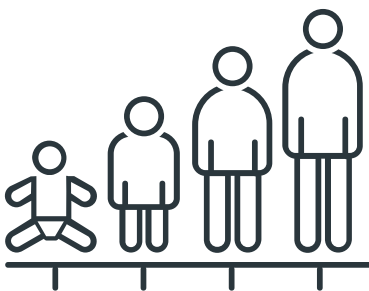
# COMPONENTS OF FITNESS



## Extended

6

**Age alone shouldn't decide what treatment is right for you or someone you love.**



While older age is often linked to other health conditions, **many people today remain healthy as they age.**

This means that **a person's overall health matters more** than their age when considering treatment.



In fact, older patients in good health may respond to treatment just as well — or even better — than younger patients with other medical conditions.



## Expert Recommendation

As people age, their ability to tolerate intensive treatment may decrease. However, **age alone should not be the only factor in deciding treatment options.**

Doctors should also consider **overall health, energy levels, quality of life, and life expectancy** when making decisions.

# COMPONENTS OF FITNESS

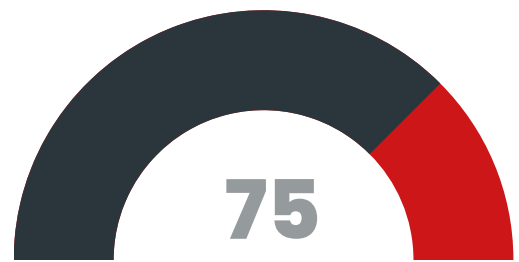
## Extended



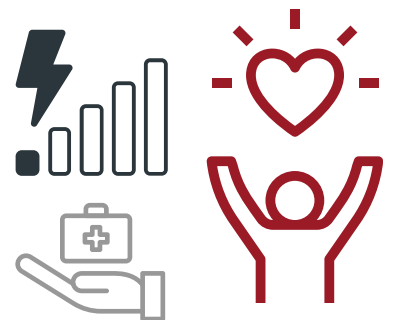
7

If you're over 75, doctors should carefully consider if intensive treatment is right for you.

For older patients in good overall health, **less-intensive therapies** (like venetoclax-based treatments) have shown promising results, **improving survival** and **being easier to tolerate**.



A study comparing different treatments in patients over 60 years old found that a **less-intensive approach helped patients live as long** as those who received intensive treatments, **while also improving their quality of life**.



## Expert Recommendation



Since there is **limited research on patients over 75**, doctors should carefully evaluate each person's situation, as intensive treatment may only benefit a few in this age group.

It's also important to consider **quality of life, personal circumstances, and whether the patient wants to receive intensive treatment**.

# COMPONENTS OF FITNESS



## Extended

8

Your ability to perform daily activities should be an important factor in deciding the right treatment for you.



Studies show that **people who move around, take care of themselves, and do daily activities** tend to have similar survival rates with intensive treatment, **no matter their age**.

However, older patients who already have difficulty with daily tasks face a higher risk of complications, no matter how strong the treatment is.



It's important to remember that older adults vary widely in their physical, mental, and emotional health, which can affect treatment results even if they seem to be in good shape.

## Expert Recommendation



When planning treatment, doctors should assess a patient's ability to handle daily tasks. For those with greater physical limitations, a **more detailed health assessment is important**.

For patients who struggle with daily tasks, doctors should carefully decide whether to proceed with active treatment or focus on supportive care, **based on each person's individual needs**.

# COMPONENTS OF FITNESS



## Extended

9

**Your own report of your physical abilities, social life, and quality of life before getting sick should be an important factor in assessing your overall health and treatment options.**

Before starting treatment, **it's important to consider how you felt and functioned before your illness.** Questionnaires should help assess how well you manage daily tasks at home and in the community.

Other factors, like **age, gender, financial situation, patient's social well-being and quality of life** should also be considered when planning support.



Studies show that a patient's ability to carry out daily activities is strongly linked to survival. This holds true **whether assessed by doctors or reported by patients themselves.** Using both perspectives can give a clearer picture of a patient's overall health, especially in older adults.

## Expert Recommendation



Even though looking back on past abilities may not always be exact, **patients' own descriptions of their physical and social well-being before AML should still be taken into account** when making treatment decisions.

# Overall Health and Genetics



# Overall Health and Genetics

## 4

### Summary

**10** Treatment choices should be based on your overall health, the specific details of your leukemia, and your personal preferences.



Your doctor should consider all the unique factors related to your health and your leukemia when making treatment decisions. This ensures that **the treatment chosen is the best fit for you.**

**11** If you're not able to tolerate active treatment, genetic tests should be done to see if targeted therapies could work for you.

Before deciding on supportive care alone, **patients who can't tolerate active treatments should have genetic testing.** These tests can help identify if other treatment options are available.



# Overall Health and Genetics

## 4

### Summary

**12** Even if your genetic profile has some unfavorable traits, it doesn't mean you can't receive intensive treatment if you are older but otherwise in good health.



**If you're older but still in good health**, doctors might still consider more intensive treatments even if you have certain genetic factors that are usually seen as risk factors.

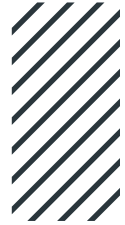
**13** If you have mental health or cognitive issues, it's important to address them before starting treatment.

**If you have any mental health conditions or cognitive challenges**, doctors should evaluate them carefully before deciding on your treatment plan.

**These factors could affect your ability to stick to your therapy**, so it's important to manage them early on to ensure the best possible result.



# OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETICS



## Extended

10

Treatment choices should be based on your overall health, the specific details of your leukemia, and your personal preferences.

Some people have **certain genetic traits that make standard chemotherapy less effective**. This means they may not respond as well to intensive treatment and may have a shorter life expectancy.



Studies suggest that for these patients, **less-intensive treatments** (like HMA-based therapies) **can work just as well** as standard chemotherapy and **may be easier to tolerate**.

## Expert Recommendation



Your doctor should consider **all the unique factors related to your health and your leukemia** when making treatment decisions. This ensures that **the treatment chosen is the best fit for you** and that you understand the potential effects and any possible challenges with it.

It's important that you're **involved in every step of the decision-making process**.

# OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETICS



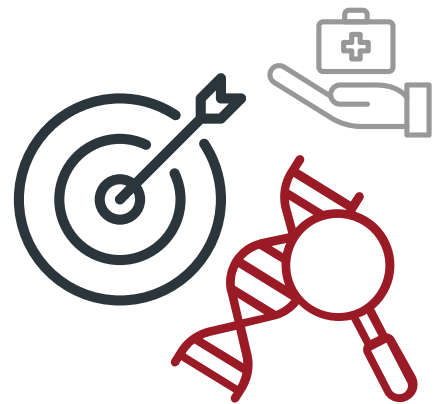
## Extended

11

**If you're not able to tolerate active treatment, genetic tests should be done to see if targeted therapies could work for you.**

People who are unable to undergo intensive treatments have a lower chance of survival.

However, some **newer, targeted medications** ( like ivosidenib and enasidenib) **may be more effective than just managing symptoms alone.**



There are also other **new treatments being tested** that may provide more options for patients who are who cannot tolerate more intensive treatments.



## Expert Recommendation

If a patient isn't able to have intensive treatments, **doctors should check for specific genetic changes.**

If a treatable change is found, a targeted treatment might be an option before relying only on care that manages symptoms.

# OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETICS



## Extended

12

Even if your genetic profile has some unfavorable traits, it doesn't mean you can't receive intensive treatment if you are older but otherwise in good overall health.



Certain genetic changes can affect how well chemotherapy works, especially for people with specific gene variations.



Researchers are studying whether older, healthy patients should receive strong chemotherapy or gentler treatments, sometimes combined with other therapies, to improve survival.



This is a complex decision, and new treatment options are being tested to find the best approach for those with more difficult genetic profiles.

## Expert Recommendation



Although the experts couldn't fully agree, **most of them agree that there's no clear reason to avoid intensive chemotherapy for older, healthy patients with more aggressive leukemia**, even though both strong and less intense treatments have not shown clear success.

They all agree, however, that treatment options are necessary for these patients.

# OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETICS



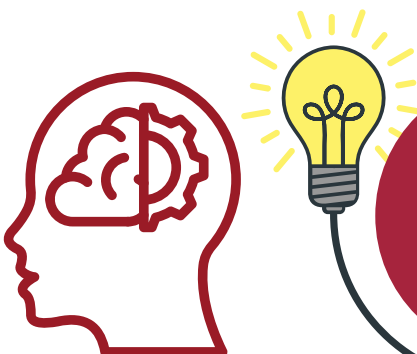
## Extended

13

**If you have mental health or cognitive issues, it's important to address them before starting treatment.**

Mental health and memory problems **can affect how you follow your treatment plan** and might lead to longer hospital stays.

A **full check-up can help find any undiagnosed cognitive issues** that might have been missed. These issues can make treatment and recovery harder.



When doctors assess older patients, they should not only look at physical health but also check things like memory, mood, and overall mental well-being.

## Expert Recommendation



If you have any mental health issues or memory problems, **it's important to assess how they might impact your ability to follow treatment plans** and any other risks they may pose.

Having specialists like **psychiatrists or psychologists** involved in your care can offer additional support to make sure you're getting the help you need.

# **When to Assess Overall Health and Genetic Factors**



# When to Assess Overall Health and Genetic Factors

5

## Summary

14

Since starting treatment right away doesn't seem to change recovery or long-term health, doctors should take time to check your overall health and the details of your leukemia first.

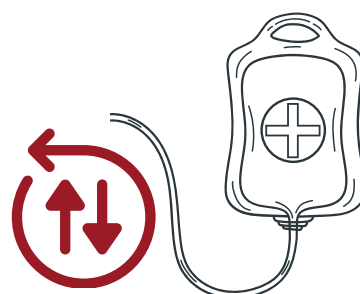


**Waiting a short period before treatment doesn't change what happens later.** Doctors should first make sure they fully understand your health and how the leukemia is affecting you before starting treatment.

15

Your overall health should be reassessed after receiving the necessary supportive treatment, especially if your health issues are believed to be caused by the disease rather than any existing conditions you had before.

If you feel worse because of the leukemia and not other health problems, **doctors should look at your condition again after providing some care to help you feel better first.**



# When to Assess Overall Health and Genetic Factors

## 5

### Summary

**16** Your overall health should be checked throughout treatment, whether you're improving or not, so doctors can adjust the treatment if needed.



Your condition should be **regularly monitored during treatment**.

If anything changes, doctors **may adjust how intense the treatment** is to best fit your needs.

**17** If the leukemia comes back, doctors should reassess your condition to help decide the next steps in treatment.

If the leukemia returns, doctors will check your health again to help determine the best way to treat you moving forward.



# WHEN TO ASSESS OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETIC FACTORS



## Extended

14

Since starting treatment right away doesn't seem to change recovery or long-term health, doctors should take time to check your overall health and the details of your leukemia first.

Recent studies have looked into whether the time between being diagnosed with AML and starting treatment affects how well patients do in the short and long term.



For patients with **stable disease**, it's usually **safe to wait a short time** to better **understand the leukemia**, **address any other health issues**, and **plan the most suitable treatment**.



## Expert Recommendation



Experts recommend taking a thorough approach that looks at both the patient's health and the disease. Since diagnosing and understanding the disease may take some time, **patients with stable conditions can wait up to three weeks before starting treatment.**

It's important for patients to know that **this time is necessary to ensure the best treatment plan is made for their specific situation.**

# WHEN TO ASSESS OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETIC FACTORS

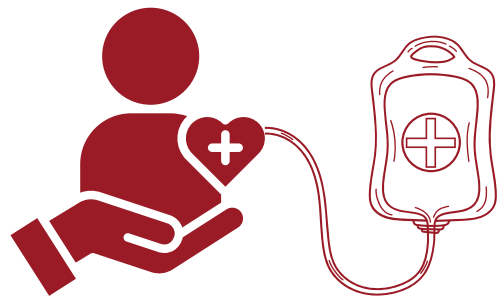


## Extended

15

**Your overall health should be reassessed after receiving the necessary supportive treatment, especially if your health issues are believed to be caused by the disease rather than any existing conditions you had before.**

When AML first appears, it can cause a significant decline in your overall health. It's important to determine whether **your current condition** is due to the **leukemia itself** or **if it's simply how you usually feel**.



**Supportive care should be started right away** to address any health problems caused by the leukemia. This helps doctors accurately assess your overall health and avoid giving either too little or too much treatment.

## Expert Recommendation



If your overall health is affected more by the leukemia than by any previous health issues, **your overall health should be re-evaluated after receiving the necessary supportive care**.

This helps doctors better understand your ability to handle treatment.

# WHEN TO ASSESS OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETIC FACTORS



## Extended

16

Your overall health should be checked throughout treatment, whether you're improving or not, so doctors can adjust the treatment if needed.

Just like your overall health may improve after supportive care when you're first diagnosed, **your condition can also change during or after treatment.**



In some cases, **intensive treatment may make your overall health worse**, and the treatment plan may need to be adjusted.



On the other hand, if you were initially not considered suitable for intensive treatment, **you may improve with less intensive therapies.**

That's why it's important for doctors to regularly recheck your health and adjust the treatment based on your current condition.

## Expert Recommendation



**Your overall health should be regularly checked** during treatment to adjust the intensity of therapy if needed.

It's important for **you and your caregivers to be kept informed about how changes in your health might lead to adjustments in your treatment**, so you can understand why the treatment plan may change.

# WHEN TO ASSESS OVERALL HEALTH AND GENETIC FACTORS

## Extended



17

**If the leukemia comes back, doctors should reassess your condition to help decide the next steps in treatment.**

If the leukemia comes back or doesn't improve, **doctors should check your genes again to understand if the leukemia has changed.** Finding these changes helps doctors create a new treatment plan that's best for you.



Targeted therapies, which focus on these changes, can be effective and cause fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy.



This can give patients **more treatment options**, including the possibility of a stem cell transplant, even for patients who were once limited to only managing symptoms.

## Expert Recommendation



If the leukemia comes back, doctors should reassess your condition to help decide the next steps in treatment.

# Quality of Life and Social Support



# Quality of Life and Social Support

6

## Summary

18

**Social support is important for all patients during treatment, no matter how intense the therapy is.**



**Everyone should have access to support from family, friends, or professional services**, whether they are receiving strong or mild treatment.

This support is important **throughout the whole treatment process.**

19

**If you don't have a caregiver, extra support should be provided to you when considering your treatment options.**

If you don't have someone to care for you, **additional support should be arranged** to make sure you have the help you need when making decisions about your treatment.



# Quality of Life and Social Support

## 6

### Summary

20

When recommending a treatment, doctors should take into account how it will affect your quality of life and your preferences.



Doctors should consider how each treatment will **impact your daily life** and **listen to what's most important to you** when deciding on the best treatment.

21

Including palliative care early on, right from diagnosis, should be considered a standard part of care to improve quality of life and support for those undergoing intensive treatment.

Palliative care, which focuses on **comfort** and **support**, should begin as soon as you are diagnosed, especially if you are receiving more intensive treatments. This can **improve your overall experience and well-being during treatment**.



# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

18

**Social support is important for all patients during treatment, no matter how intense the therapy is.**

Having strong social support — like **family, friends, or a partner** — can make a big difference in your treatment and survival.



Studies show that **patients who feel supported tend to live longer** than those who feel isolated.

For people with AML, **those who live alone** are less likely to receive intensive treatment or a stem cell transplant, which may **affect their long-term health**.



**Younger patients, women, and those without support** are also more likely to miss or stop treatment.

If you or a loved one are going through leukemia treatment, it's important to have a strong support system. Talk to your medical team about any challenges so they can help find solutions.

## Expert Recommendation



Patients should receive **support from a team of healthcare professionals**, not just doctors, **starting from the beginning of their treatment**. This approach helps provide care in all areas of their health and well-being.

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

19

**If you don't have a caregiver, extra support should be provided to you when considering your treatment options.**

Most people with AML are older and may not have someone to help care for them.



If you don't have a caregiver, extra social support should be provided to help with your treatment and recovery.



On the other end, when caregivers are present, they often feel overwhelmed.

It's important to **provide support to caregivers**, helping them manage stress and improve their ability to care for their loved ones.

## Expert Recommendation



Although social support isn't directly part of your physical health, **it can still affect how well treatment works.**

Therefore, it's important to have strong social support when starting treatment, especially if you don't have a caregiver to help you.

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

20

When recommending a treatment, doctors should take into account how it will affect your quality of life and your preferences.

Tracking quality of life can help **improve symptom management, strengthen communication** with doctors, and **increase overall satisfaction with care**



Quality of life assessments provide **valuable information** beyond standard medical tests and can help guide treatment decisions.

Studies have shown that **regularly monitoring symptoms reported by patients** may even lead to them **living longer**.

Studies also show that **younger** patients, **women**, and those with **lower incomes** may have a lower quality of life, highlighting the need for **extra support** during treatment.

## Expert Recommendation



Any treatment you receive will likely impact how you feel day-to-day. **Doctors should talk to you about how treatments might affect your life** and make sure to **keep checking** in on this throughout your therapy.

# GENERAL DEFINITIONS



## Extended

21

Including palliative care early on, right from diagnosis, should be considered a standard part of care to improve quality of life and support for those undergoing intensive treatment.

### Early Palliative Care

Involves **adding** palliative care to active cancer treatment within **eight weeks of diagnosis**.

This approach focuses on open communication, symptom management, emotional and social support, and helping patients make informed decisions about their care.



Studies have shown that **Early Palliative Care** can **improve quality of life, reduce symptoms like anxiety and depression, and even extend survival.**

## Expert Recommendation



While experts did not fully agree, **most (67%) believe that early palliative care should be a standard part of treatment**, even for patients receiving intensive chemotherapy.

It should start at diagnosis and be **personalized to each patient's needs**, focusing on symptom relief, emotional support, and overall well-being.

# Conclusion

Deciding the best treatment for you or your loved one with AML may seem complex, but it's an essential step in finding the most effective care. With advances in genetics and new treatment options, more people are now eligible for active treatment, even if they don't meet traditional health criteria.

What matters most is how you feel, what your quality of life is like, and what your personal preferences are. These factors should play a central role in deciding your treatment plan, ensuring it's tailored to your unique needs.

It's important that your doctors explain your options in clear, simple language so you can fully understand the choices ahead. The more involved you are in the decision-making process, the better your treatment can align with your goals and priorities, ensuring that it supports not only your health but also your overall well-being.

# Report

## **FITNESS ASSESSMENT IN ACUTE MYELOID LEUKEMIA**

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AN EXPERT PANEL ON  
BEHALF OF EUROPEAN LEUKEMIA NET

March 2025

## References

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## **Acute Leukemia Advocates Network (ALAN)**

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ALAN is formally hosted by the Leukemia Patient Advocates Foundation  
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