



# TIP SHEET Leukemia

## What You Should Know

**Leukemia** is a type of blood cell cancer that occurs when the bone marrow produces abnormal blood cells, usually white blood cells. As these abnormal cells divide and produce more abnormal cells, they crowd out healthy blood cells, making it difficult for the body to get oxygen to tissues, fight infections and control bleeding.

### TYPES OF LEUKEMIA

Most cases of leukemia are one of four main leukemia types. These are called either **acute** or **chronic**, and are named according to the specific type of blood cell that's affected:

- **Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)**
- **Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL)**
- **Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML)**
- **Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL)**

**Acute** leukemia develops and progresses quickly, and requires immediate treatment.

**Chronic** leukemia usually develops and progresses slowly, and may not produce symptoms right away. Treatment is needed eventually to prevent leukemia cells from overtaking healthy cells.

Leukemia is slightly more common in men than in women.

## Symptoms to Tell Your Doctor

Signs of leukemia may be vague and can indicate conditions other than cancer:

- ✓ Tiredness, weakness, shortness of breath
- ✓ Unexplained weight loss
- ✓ Fever or frequent infections
- ✓ Night sweats
- ✓ Appetite loss
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Enlarged lymph nodes (felt as bumps under the skin)
- ✓ Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- ✓ Sense of fullness or pain in the belly, caused by enlarged spleen and/or liver
- ✓ Feeling full after eating small amount of food
- ✓ Excess bruising, bleeding, frequent or severe nosebleeds, bleeding gums

Leukemia is the most common cancer among children and teens, accounting for

**1 of 3 cases.**

Fortunately, cancer in children and teens remains rare.



## Why Roswell Park Cancer Institute?

**Nationally Recognized.** RPCI is a National Cancer Institute (NCI) designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, one of only 44 in the nation and the only one in New York State outside of New York City.

**State-of-the-Art Care Center.** Patients are cared for in a specialized unit of RPCI's hospital, where the private patient rooms and entire unit are HEPA-filtered and uniquely designed to maintain the highest standards for leukemia care.

**Superior 5-year survival** rates for AML and CML patients compared with average national outcomes reported in the National Cancer Data Base.

## Meet the Doctors

(above from left to right)

### Acute and Chronic Leukemias

1) Elizabeth A. Griffiths, MD  
Hematology/Oncology

2) Evelena Ontiveros, MD, PhD  
Hematology

3) James E. Thompson, MD  
Hematology/Oncology

4) Eunice S. Wang, MD  
Hematology/Oncology

### Chronic Leukemias

5) Seema Ali Bhat, MD  
Hematology/Oncology

6) Francisco J. Hernandez-Ilizaliturri, MD  
Medical Oncology

7) Sadat Ozair, MD  
Hematology

## Treatment the RPCI Way

We approach cancer treatment on an individual and personal basis, treating the whole person, not just the cancer. We offer the highest level of cancer care, including:

**A multidisciplinary approach** by a team of leukemia care experts, including hematologists and oncologists, psychologists, social workers and other experts who work together to provide comprehensive and integrated care—under one roof.

**Blood & Marrow Transplant (BMT) Center** is one of the nation's top centers for BMT transplantation and designated a Blue Distinction Center® by BlueCross BlueShield, one of only three such centers in New York State.

**Access to the latest therapies.** The newest treatments, available through clinical research studies, are important options for many patients.

RPCI specialists  
treat all leukemias,  
including rare cancer  
types and other blood  
disorders.

Patients with a diagnosis or suspicion of leukemia  
can be evaluated at RPCI within **24 hours.**

**Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Program**  
addresses the specific and unique needs of  
younger patients during treatment and beyond.