

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

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Leukemia is the most common type of cancer in children. About 30 percent of all cancers that affect children and young adults are leukemia. It is most commonly diagnosed between ages 2 and 10. Leukemia begins in tissues that produce blood cells. The good news is that about 90 percent of children diagnosed with leukemia can be cured, thanks to advances in the past several decades, including pioneering work that started here at Memorial Sloan Kettering.

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At MSK Kids, we know how scary it is to hear that your child has leukemia. You may have many questions and feel worried about your child's future. Our

[pediatric leukemia specialists](#) have the expertise to find the most-effective [treatment](#) for your child, the ability to explain everything to you and your child, and the compassion to alleviate your concerns. Our goal is to cure your child so they can have a bright, healthy future.

## Where does leukemia come from?

Healthy bone marrow contains young cells that mature into blood cells, including platelets, red blood cells, and white blood cells. White blood cells normally help fight infection. In leukemia, however, changes occur in young white blood cells that prevent them from maturing properly. Instead, they grow and multiply uncontrollably. These immature white blood cells flood the body's organs, interfere with organ function, and prevent normal blood cells from forming.

## Why choose MSK Kids for leukemia care?

One of the biggest strengths of MSK Kids, and one that sets us apart from most pediatric leukemia programs, is our ability to fully understand the biology of your child's cancer. Through a robust collaboration between our pediatric leukemia doctors and researchers, MSK's Department of Pathology, and the [Pediatric Translational Medicine Program](#), we have the tools, expertise, and resources to scrutinize the origins of your child's cancer right down to the most basic molecules. Working together, our team analyzes your child's cancer to see what genetic mutations may be present. The findings of this testing can help us identify the most effective therapy or match your child with a [clinical trial](#) of a new treatment.

## Offering Every Type of Treatment

MSK Kids provides every type of treatment available for young people with leukemia. This includes [chemotherapy, radiation therapy, molecular targeted therapy, bone marrow transplantation](#), and [immunotherapy, including the most advanced treatment: chimeric antigen receptor \(CAR\) T cell therapy](#). CAR T is used to treat children with recurrent or persistent B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). With CAR T cell therapy, white blood cells called T cells are removed from the patient. The cells are altered in a laboratory to recognize a protein on the cancer cells. They are then multiplied to larger numbers and returned to the patient, where they find and destroy cancer cells. MSK was involved in the initial research that led to the US Food and Drug Administration's approval of CAR T cell therapy. We have exceptional experience caring for people receiving this intensive treatment.

## ... for Every Type of Pediatric Leukemia

The MSK Kids leukemia team cares for children and young adults with ALL (the most common kind of leukemia in kids), acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), and acute promyelocytic leukemia (a subtype of AML). We also have experience caring for children with chronic myelogenous leukemia and children with myelodysplastic and myeloproliferative syndromes (these cancers that are more common in adults but do occur in children from time to time). No matter what kind of leukemia your child has, we can customize a care plan to tackle it head-on.

## A History of Success

Memorial Sloan Kettering's multidisciplinary team of pediatric leukemia experts pioneered the use of new chemotherapy regimens that have increased long-term survival for children and young adults with leukemia. Our leukemia team was also the first group to recognize the importance of a child's initial response to therapy as a key factor to guide the choice of the most appropriate treatment.

## Can my other children develop leukemia?

This is a common question we hear from parents of children with cancer. The members of the [MSK Kids Clinical Genetics Service and Pediatric Cancer Predisposition Screening Program](#) can answer it. Our clinical genetics experts can help you and your family understand the role of genetics in your child's leukemia and whether any genetic mutations may affect other family members. From your first consultation to follow-up care, we are available every step of the way. We provide the guidance and support that you and your family need.

## We Are Here for Your Family

At MSK Kids, we understand how a [diagnosis](#) of leukemia can affect your entire family. Your child's treatment can be lengthy and seem to turn your lives upside down. We provide all of the [support](#) that you and your family need during this challenging time. This may include emotional support from psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers; help for your child and their siblings from child life specialists and others who ease the hospital experience; and mind-body therapies from our integrative medicine professionals. Our staff members have years of experience understanding how

leukemia and its treatment affect patients and families. We encourage you to reach out for any support you need. There's no need to go it alone.

## Access to Clinical Trials

Clinical trials study new drugs, new drug combinations, and other ways of treating diseases. MSK Kids offers several clinical trials for children with leukemia, including those whose disease has come back or continued growing despite standard treatment. If your child's leukemia cannot be successfully treated using conventional leukemia therapies, we may be able to offer a new treatment through a clinical trial. We try everything we can to help your child achieve remission. That means the treatment has destroyed nearly all of the abnormal blood cells and the body is back to producing normal blood cells. Ultimately, the goal is to cure your child.

### New Patient Appointments

Call [833-MSK-KIDS](tel:833-MSK-KIDS) Available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Eastern time)

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