Managing Leukemia

Leukemia is a group of cancers involving blood cells. While the exact cause is unknown, genetic factors play a role and active research is producing promising therapies for some types of leukemia. Asking the right questions during your conversation with your doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know
Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here’s what they mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Cell</th>
<th>A cell produced in bone marrow. Two main types of blood cells include red blood cells (which carry iron, oxygen, and other nutrients to cells) and white blood cells (part of the immune system).</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bone Marrow</td>
<td>Soft tissue within larger bones where blood cells and other components are produced. Leukemia results when blood cells are not fully or properly formed.</td>
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<td>Bone Marrow Tests and Treatment</td>
<td>Bone marrow biopsies and aspirations are used to diagnose some forms of leukemia. A bone marrow transplant is the complete replacement of a person's bone marrow, and is one treatment for some forms of leukemia.</td>
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<td>Complete Blood Count (CBC)</td>
<td>A standard blood test that can be an early indicator of leukemia. It provides information about the counts of types of blood cells, and the concentration of hemoglobin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL)</td>
<td>A cancer of the lymphoid line of blood cells characterized by the production of large numbers of immature lymphocytes. Acute leukemia must be treated fast, as it progresses quickly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL)</td>
<td>A cancer wherein too many lymphocytes are made. CLL can be slow growing and asymptomatic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)</td>
<td>A cancer of the myeloid line of blood cells. Acute leukemia must also be treated fast due to how quickly it progresses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML)</td>
<td>A cancer of overproduction and mis-regulation of myeloid cells in the bone marrow and blood. CML is largely treated with new drugs which have dramatically improved outcomes.</td>
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Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage leukemia.

About Symptoms

- What symptoms can I expect?
- What can I do about each of the symptoms I experience?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- How did I get this—what are the causes?

About Diagnosis

- What type of leukemia do I have?
- How did you diagnose this?
- What stage of cancer is it? What does this staging mean for this type of leukemia?

About Treatment

- What are my treatment options?
- How long will treatment take?
- What are the side effects to drug or chemotherapy options?
- Is surgery or transplant a cure? What can I expect before and after surgery or transplant?
- Are there side effects to radiation treatment? How will I feel during treatment?
- What can I do to help my treatments be most effective?

About Living With Leukemia

- Should I change my lifestyle now—including nutrition and physical activity options—and do you have any recommendations?
- What is the survivability of this stage of this type of leukemia—what can I expect?
- Where can I find counseling from a professional?
- Where can I find support from other people who have survived the type of cancer I have?

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