

■ Childhood Cancer: A Parent's Guide to Early Warning Signs and When to Seek Care

Childhood cancers are rare but treatable. This guide helps parents recognize warning signs early and know when to seek medical help.

■ Why Early Detection Matters

Early diagnosis means easier treatment, fewer complications, and better recovery. Many normal illnesses in kids are harmless, but persistent or unusual symptoms should never be ignored.

■ Changes in energy, skin color, or bruising

- Tiredness, weakness, or pale skin
- Frequent bruises or nosebleeds
- Fever that doesn't go away
- Bone/joint pain, swollen belly or glands

When to act: If symptoms last more than 1–2 weeks, schedule a doctor visit.

■ Headaches, vision, or balance problems

- Morning headaches with vomiting
- Trouble seeing, hearing, or walking
- Dizziness or poor balance
- Behavior or school changes

When to act: Seek urgent care if headaches cause vomiting or confusion.

■ Lumps, swelling, or masses that don't go away

- Firm or growing lump in neck, abdomen, or limb
- Painful swelling not related to injury

When to act: Any new or growing lump should be checked promptly.

■ Eye or vision changes

- White or glowing pupil in photos
- Crossed eyes or loss of vision
- Persistent redness or bulging eye

When to act: If a white glow is seen in the eye, see a doctor immediately.

■ Unexplained weight loss or appetite changes

- Weight loss, poor appetite

- Persistent nausea or abdominal pain
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits

When to act: Persistent symptoms need medical attention.

■ Pain that won't go away

- Bone pain lasting for weeks
- Pain that wakes the child at night
- Pain with swelling or redness

When to act: If pain keeps returning, see a healthcare provider.

■ Recurring fevers or infections

- Fever without clear cause
- Infections not responding to antibiotics
- Extreme tiredness between infections

When to act: Persistent fever and fatigue should be checked.

■ When to Seek Urgent or Emergency Care

- Severe headaches with vomiting or confusion
- Breathing trouble or swelling in face/neck
- Sudden vision loss or white reflection in eye
- Continuous bleeding or unexplained bruises
- Fever above 102°F (39°C) lasting over 3 days
- Rapidly growing lump or severe pain

■ Final Message for Parents

Most children with these symptoms do not have cancer — but if something feels wrong, trust your instincts. You know your child best. Early medical attention can make all the difference.

“Early action saves lives — not because parents should fear the worst, but because they care enough to check.” ■