

# Learning about signs and symptoms of childhood cancer



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# Introduction

We adults are familiar with the profound pain that cancer generates in those who suffer from it and in their families. What we may not know is that, in the case of children and adolescents, the first step in combating it properly is to detect it early. And in this task, parents and caregivers, as well as the extended family and health personnel in general, play a very important role.

As for the childhood cancer, life turns at the pace of early detection. In a matter of days, a favorable scenario for recovery could be complicated if parents and caregivers do not detect early danger signs in the child's health.

But what are these signs and how to act when faced with them? In this guide you will learn the signs and symptoms that you should follow carefully in the child or adolescent in your care. We propose a simple and didactic way of learning, even with a song that includes certain steps, so that these signs can be easily internalized by everyone.

So you can also move at the pace of early detection and act in time.

*Saving a life is in your hands!*

# Early detection

increases chances of survival

## Did you know that?

- According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), nearly **280,000** children and adolescents catch cancer worldwide each year.
- In **85%** of cases of childhood cancer there are signs and symptoms that you, as a parent or caregiver, can learn to detect.



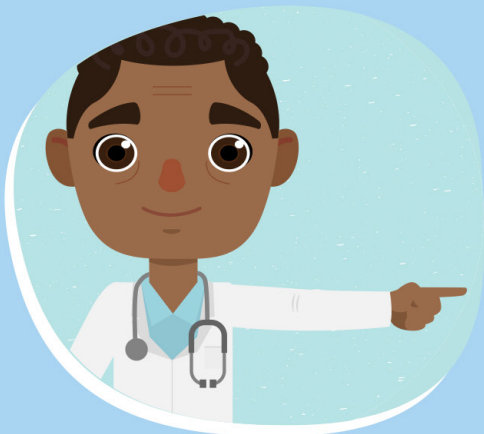
Time  
is key

**Why?** Because there is nothing better than early detection, as it increases the chances that children and adolescents will receive effective treatment.



## And what makes for effective treatment, according to PAHO?

- Increases the probability of survival.
- Reduces patient suffering.
- It is usually a more economical and less intensive treatment.



# Palpation

A care that can save lives

To protect children, parents or caregivers should periodically check certain areas of the body.



## What do we look for during palpation?

Bumps in the neck, armpits or groin

Lump somewhere in the belly

Swelling (without pain or redness) in any other area of the body

## How do I do the palpation?

Make small circles with your fingers on the skin, looking for any possible lumps.

Take advantage of playtime to touch areas such as the neck or armpit, while having fun tickling.

Hug the child very carefully and lovingly and run the palms of your hands over the back.



## ...and when children grow up?

After childhood, they need to learn to check themselves.

Explain to them patiently and carefully each area to watch out for.

Create an atmosphere of trust with them so that they are not afraid to tell you about any anomaly they find in their body.



## Did you find anything suspicious?

So, don't waste time and make an appointment with the doctor. Only specialists will know what it is and what care should be taken.

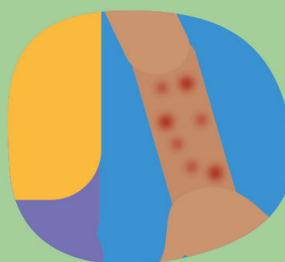
# The importance of observation

Checking your child also involves looking for signs through the eyes.

What should you identify in this case?



1. White spot in the eye



2. Petechiae or red spots on the body



3. Marked pallor

## Listen carefully

Are you paying attention to what the child is expressing?



1. Does he/she tell you he/she is tired?
2. Does he/she complain of headaches?
3. Does he/she repeat that he/she has no appetite?
4. Does your teacher comment that his/her behavior has changed?

Behind words or attitudes that may seem normal during childhood, there could be an illness that needs immediate attention. Act according to the recommendations of specialists and take the child or adolescent to a medical consultation.

# Signs of childhood cancer

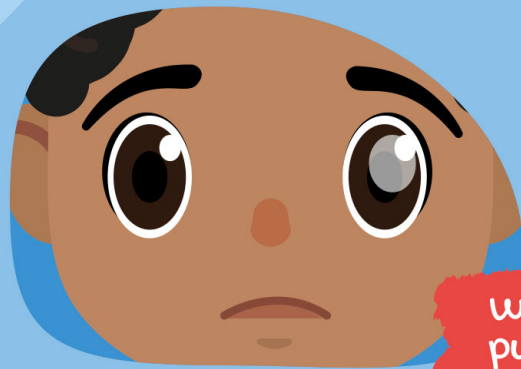
#1

Sudden  
bleeding from  
nose or gums



#2

White  
pupil  
reflex



#3

Lumpy lymph  
nodes, usually in  
the armpits, neck  
or groin



#4

Abrupt  
mood  
changes



#5

Lack of  
balance  
when  
walking



#6

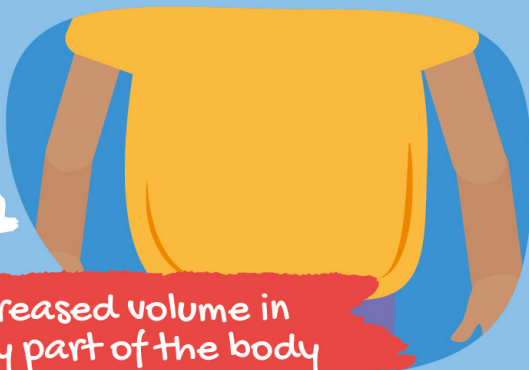
Weight  
loss





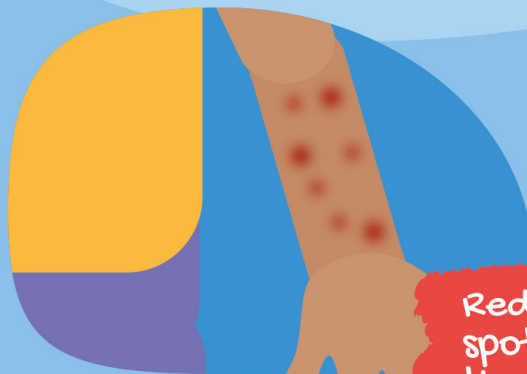
If you notice any of these signs in your child  
**DO NOT HESITATE TO GO TO THE DOCTOR!**

#7



Increased volume in any part of the body

#8



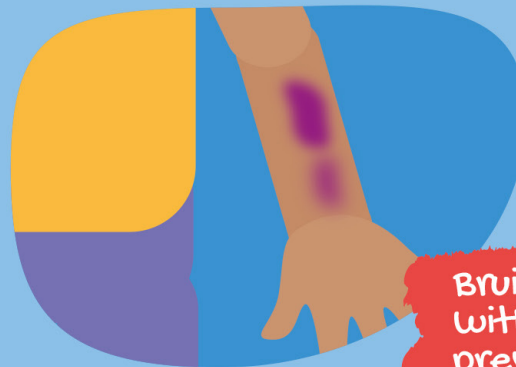
Red spots on the skin

#9



Alterations of cranial nerves, such as facial palsy or drooping eyelid

#10



Bruises without previous blows

#11



Night sweats

#12



Pale or yellowish skin

# Symptoms

## of childhood cancer

These signals may not be noticeable to parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is important that the child has the confidence to communicate how he/she is feeling.

#1



Fever that does not go down with antipyretics (such as acetaminophen) or antibiotics

#2



Listlessness and tiredness

#3



Headache and dizziness

#4



Vomiting

#5



Bone and joint pain

#6



Problems passing saliva and swallowing

#7



Recurrent itching



**Keep this advice in mind:**  
Listening to the child and validating his/her emotions is fundamental to forming a bond of trust.

# Join the pace of early detection!

The rhythm of detection on time

950 views

PAHO TV  
124 000 subscribers

SUSCRIBE

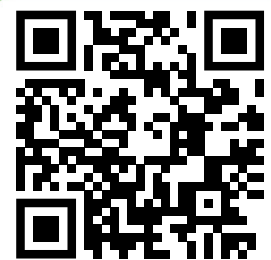
1:30

OPS

Like, Comment, Share, Playlist, More

A YouTube video player interface for a video titled "The rhythm of detection on time" by PAHO TV. The video thumbnail shows a diverse group of eight cartoon characters, including a young girl, two doctors, a woman, a man, a young boy, an elderly woman, and another man, all smiling and gesturing. The video player shows a progress bar at approximately 25%, a duration of 1:30, and 950 views. The channel name is PAHO TV with 124,000 subscribers. There are icons for like, comment, share, playlist, and more options. A red "SUSCRIBE" button is visible in the bottom right corner of the player area.

Listen to this song and learn, step-by-step, how you can stay alert to the signs and symptoms of childhood cancer.



# Glossary



Have you come across a medical term related to cancer that you don't understand? Check this list and find out what it means.

1. **Adenitis.** Inflammation of a lymph node.
2. **Adynamia.** The absence of movement or reaction, which can lead to a state of prostration. The causes may be physical or psychological.
3. **Aphasia.** Loss of ability to produce or understand language.
4. **Amenorrhea.** Absence of menstruation for a period of time longer than 90 days.
5. **Aniridia.** Absence of iris in the eye.
6. **Asthenia.** Generalized sensation of tiredness, fatigue, physical and psychic weakness.
7. **Ataxia.** Incoordination in the movement of body parts, causing imbalance.
8. **Biopsy.** Procedure to extract a sample of tissue or cells from the body to be analyzed in a laboratory.
9. **Headache.** Pain in the head.
10. **Diplopia.** Double vision.
11. **Dysarthria.** Speech disturbance that is based on a neurological disorder.
12. **Dysphagia.** Difficulty passing food.
13. **Dysphasia.** Partial loss of speech due to a lesion in the cerebral cortex.
14. **Dyspnea.** Difficulty in breathing.
15. **Dysuria.** Difficulty in urinating.
16. **Enophthalmos.** Backward displacement of the eye in the orbit.
17. **Epistaxis.** Hemorrhage with origin in the nasal cavities.
18. **Echymosis.** Coloration caused by superficial bleeding into the skin or mucous membranes, due to rupture of blood vessels by a blow or clotting problems.
19. **Gingivorrhage.** Spontaneous bleeding in the gums.
20. **Hematuria.** Presence of blood in the urine.
21. **Hemianopsia.** Lack of vision in the external field of both eyes.

22. **Hemiparesis.** Motor weakness of one arm and one leg on the same side of the body.
23. **Hyphema.** Blood in the anterior chamber of the eye.
24. **Leukemia.** Malignant disease of the bone marrow.
25. **Leukocoria.** Reflex or white spot in the pupillary region.
26. **Leukoria.** White pupil.
27. **Lymphadenopathy.** Enlarged lymph nodes.
28. **Lymphomas.** Neoplastic diseases that develop in the lymphatic system.
29. **Metastasis.** Spread of a cancerous focus to an organ other than the one in which it started.
30. **Myosis.** Contraction of the pupil of the eye.
31. **Monoparesis.** Slight paralysis of a single limb or part.
32. **Nystagmus.** Involuntary and uncontrollable movement of the eyes.
33. **Oncologist.** A physician who specializes in caring for a person with cancer.
34. **Osteolysis.** Wear and shrinkage of one or more areas of a bone.
35. **Pollakiuria.** Frequent urination not associated with an increase in urine volume.
36. **Proptosis.** Displacement of the eyeball forward.
37. **Ptosis.** Lowering of the upper eyelid in relation to the eyeball (drooping eyelid).
38. **Purpura.** Leakage of small violet-colored blood vessels under the skin, secondary to a decrease in the number of platelets.
39. **Chemotherapy.** Drugs to eliminate cancer cells, causing their death or controlling their growth.
40. **Radiation therapy.** Treatment that uses radiation to eliminate cancer cells and reduce tumor size.
41. **Recurrence.** Reappearance of a cancer after an apparent disappearance following surgical or medical treatment.
42. **Remission.** Diminution or disappearance of the signs and symptoms of cancer.
43. **Tumor.** An abnormal mass of body tissue. It can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

More information: [www.paho.org/en/topics/childhood-and-adolescence-cancer](http://www.paho.org/en/topics/childhood-and-adolescence-cancer)

