


CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH


Childhood cancers

Childhood cancers are defined as cancers diagnosed in children younger than 15 years of age. Although childhood cancers are very rare, the incidence rate is increasing and each year between 800 and 1 000 children are diagnosed with cancer in South Africa, and approximately 400 000 children globally. In South Africa, the five most common childhood cancers are leukaemias, lymphomas, brain and spinal cord tumours, nephroblastoma (or Wilms tumours) and soft tissue sarcomas.

Survival rates among childhood cancer patients are as high as 80% in high-income countries, compared to survival rates of 15-20% in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The poor survival rates in LMICs are a result of several factors; diagnostic challenges due to inadequate health infrastructure and lack of

specialist doctors, limitations in access to treatment including chemotherapy shortages, and delayed diagnosis. It is estimated that less than half of children with cancer in South Africa are diagnosed, with the majority of cases only diagnosed during the advanced stages of the illness. This is partly due to a lack of awareness regarding the early warning signs of childhood cancer. It is important that healthcare workers and parents familiarise themselves with the early warning signs as childhood cancers symptoms may be non-specific or similar to those seen in other illnesses. Early warning signs, also referred to as the “St SILUAN warning signs”, is an effective method to aid early detection, as 85% of paediatric cancers are associated with the following signs:


NATIONAL HEALTH LABORATORY SERVICE
National Cancer Registry









Look out for these warning signs and symptoms

St SILUAN warning signs of

CHILDHOOD

— CANCER —

 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">S</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">SEEK</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">medical help early for ongoing symptoms</p>	 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">I</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">EYE</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">White spot in the eye, new squint, sudden blindness or bulging eyeball</p>	 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">L</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">LUMP</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">on the stomach, pelvis, head, arms, legs, testicle or glands</p>	 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">U</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">UNEXPLAINED</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">fever present for over two weeks, weight loss, fatigue, pale appearance, easy bruising & bleeding</p>	 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">A</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">ACHING</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">bones, joints, back and easy fractures</p>	 <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">N</h2> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">NEUROLOGICAL</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">signs a change in walk balance or speech, regression, continuous headaches with / without vomiting & enlarged head</p>
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