

Leukaemia

What is Leukaemia?

Leukaemia is cancer of the blood cells. It starts in the bone marrow, the soft tissue inside most bones. Bone marrow is where blood cells are made.

When you are healthy, your bone marrow makes:

- **White blood cells**; which help your body fight infection.
- **Red blood cells**, which carry oxygen to all parts of your body.
- **Platelets**, which help your blood clot.

When you have leukaemia, the bone marrow starts to make a lot of abnormal white blood cells, called leukaemia cells.

They don't do the work of normal white blood cells, they grow faster than normal cells, and they don't stop growing when they should.

Over time, leukaemia cells can crowd out the normal blood cells.

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What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may depend on what type of leukaemia you have, but common symptoms include:

- Fever and night sweats.
- Headaches.
- Bruising or bleeding easily.
- Bone or joint pain.
- A swollen or painful belly from an enlarged spleen.
- Swollen lymph nodes in the armpit, neck, or groin.
- Getting a lot of infections.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Losing weight and not feeling hungry.

How is leukaemia diagnosed?

Your doctor will order blood tests. Leukaemia causes a high level of white blood cells and low levels of other types of blood cells.



Leukemia (American English) or leukaemia (British English)