



Leukemia is a cancer of the blood cells that starts in the bone marrow (a spongy tissue at the center of most bones). Bone marrow is where new blood cells are made. If you have been told you have leukemia, you've probably already had blood tests and a bone marrow biopsy (a test that takes some tissue to check for cancer). Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells to check for certain proteins and gene changes called biomarkers. You might also have other procedures. These tests help your doctor know what type of leukemia you have and what treatment is best for you.

Types for leukemia

Leukemia is known as a liquid cancer. It doesn't usually form a solid tumor like most cancers.

There are many types of leukemia. It can be fast growing (**acute**) or slower growing (**chronic**). It starts in the **myeloid** blood cells or in the **lymphocytic** blood cells.

The most common types of leukemia are:

- Acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL)
- Acute myeloid leukemia (AML)
- Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL)
- Chronic myeloid leukemia (CML)

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Chronic leukemia

Not all types of chronic leukemia need to be treated right away. If treatment is needed, chemo, targeted drug therapy, or stem cell transplant may be recommended.

Be sure to ask:

- What type of leukemia do I have?
- What subtype and phase is it? What does that mean?
- What else have you learned from my test results?
- Will I need more tests or biomarker testing?
- What is the goal of treatment?
- What are my treatment options? What do you think is best for me and why?
- Would a stem cell transplant work for me?
- Are there any clinical trials for my type of leukemia?

What to expect before and during treatment

The doctor who treats your leukemia might be a hematologist (blood doctor) or an oncologist (cancer doctor). Depending on the type of treatment you need, your cancer care team could include different doctors, nurses, and other health care workers.

For example, if you need chemo, you will go through phases or cycles of treatment with tests and check-ups in between. Your cancer care team will help you understand what to expect before, during, and after each phase of treatment. They will explain how it is given, help you get ready for it, keep track of how you're doing, and help you manage any side effects. You will also get blood tests, scans, or other tests at certain times to see how well your treatment is working.

Not everyone going through treatment for leukemia has the same side effects. For example, the side