

The Early Signs of Leukemia in Adults



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Clinical Contributors to this Story

James McCloskey, M.D.

contributes to topics such as **Hematology, Medical Oncology**.

Jamie Koprivnikar, M.D.

contributes to topics such as **Hematology, Medical Oncology**.

Many people think of leukemia as a blood cancer predominantly of children, but it can occur at any age, says

[James McCloskey, M.D.](#)

, a leukemia specialist at

[John Theurer Cancer Center](#)

at

[Hackensack University Medical Center](#)

. “Certain kinds of leukemia are very common in children,” he says. “Other types of leukemia are more common in adults.”

Leukemia is one of the most common blood cancers diagnosed in adults and in children in the U.S., according to the National Institute of Health's National Cancer Institute. In adults, it is most often diagnosed in people aged 65 to 74.

There are two main types of leukemia:

Acute leukemias including lymphoblastic (also called lymphocytic) leukemia (ALL), Acute myelogenous leukemia (AML)

Chronic Leukemias including Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) and Chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML)

Early Symptoms of Acute Leukemia

Early symptoms may be fairly subtle but usually develop quickly, Dr. McCloskey says.

Common symptoms include:

Shortness of breath

Fatigue

Unexplained fever

Night sweats

Unexplained weight loss

Loss of appetite

Bone pain

Bruising

Bleeding

Frequently, people learn there's something wrong as a result of having blood work done for something else, says

[Jamie Koprivnikar, M.D.](#)

, another leukemia expert at John Theurer Cancer Center.

Dr. McCloskey cautions. "Any time a person is experiencing a symptom that seems out of the ordinary to them, they should listen to their instincts and see their primary care physician," Dr. McCloskey says.

Adds Dr. Koprivnikar, "The best place to start is always with your primary care doctor. They know you, and they have some prior labs that provide a baseline sense of what's normal for you."

Who Is at Risk of Leukemia?

In general, there aren't any risk factors making it more likely you'll get leukemia, says Dr. Koprivnikar.

"For most patients, we really don't understand why they develop the disease," she says. "Most patients don't have any risk factors. They're often left wondering why this happened to them."

That said, there is a higher incidence of the disease among those of Hispanic ethnicity and those who had certain types of chemotherapy or radiation to treat an earlier malignancy, Dr. Koprivnikar says.

Dr. Koprivnikar and Dr. McCloskey both practice in Hackensack. To make an appointment, call [855-424-9355](tel:855-424-9355)

. To find a provider near you, visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org

Learn more about the [cancer care services](#) provided by Hackensack Meridian Health.

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Source:

[National Cancer Institute](#)