

Let's talk about...

Explaining Cancer to Children

What is Cancer?

Your body is made of billions of tiny building blocks called **cells**. You have different types for everything, like your brain, skin, hair, and blood. Usually, your body is an expert at growing new, healthy cells to keep you strong.

Cancer happens when some of these cells become “unhealthy.” Instead of following the body’s normal rules, these unhealthy cells start growing way too fast. When a bunch of these cells stick together in one spot, they form a lump called a **tumor**. Some tumors are easy to see or feel, while others stay hidden deep inside the body.

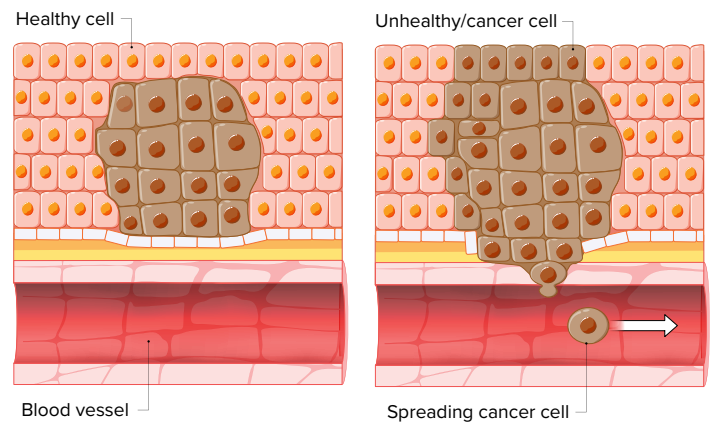
The 3 Cs of Cancer

It helps to remember three important facts about this illness:

- **Cancer:** It’s the name of the illness, but it is not like a cold or the flu. You can’t “catch” it from someone.
- **Contagious:** Cancer is **not** contagious. You can still hug, play with, and spend time with someone who has it without any risk of getting it yourself.
- **Cause:** You did **not** cause the illness. Nothing you said, did, or even thought made this happen. It is never a child’s fault.

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: <http://ucdavis.health/childlife>

Cancer cell development



How Doctors Treat Cancer

- **Chemotherapy (Chemo):** This is a very strong medicine designed to find and stop cancer cells. Sometimes, chemo accidentally affects healthy cells too, like the ones that grow hair. This is why people might lose their hair or feel very tired and sick during treatment.
- **Radiation:** This is an invisible beam of energy that targets the cancer cells. You can’t see it or feel it while it’s happening, but afterward, it can make a person feel exhausted or give them a “sunburn” feeling on their skin.