

Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia



CANCER SURVEILLANCE
SPOTLIGHT

WHAT IS ALL?

Acute lymphocytic leukemia (also called acute lymphoblastic leukemia or ALL) is a disease caused by the production of too many infection-fighting white blood cells (lymphocytes) in an undeveloped form.

WHO GETS ALL?

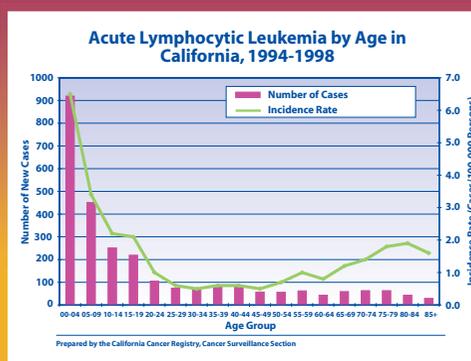
ALL occurs in adults and children, but is the most common cancer diagnosed among children. Of the 500 to 600 new cases diagnosed each year in California, nearly 70 percent occur in children and adolescents under age 20. ALL accounts for nearly one-quarter of all new malignancies diagnosed annually among children and adolescents under age 20.



ALL incidence rates vary by age, race, and gender. Among both males and females, incidence is highest in children age 0 to 4, peaking around age 2. Incidence rates are higher among males than females in all age groups. Rates for ALL are substantially lower in black children than in Hispanic, non-Hispanic white, and Asian/Pacific Islander children.



In California, of the 500 to 600 New Cases of ALL Diagnosed Annually, Nearly 70 Percent Occur in Children and Adolescents Under Age 20.



WHO SURVIVES ALL?

Treatment for ALL has improved tremendously over the last few decades. About 75 percent to 80 percent of children with ALL survive more than five years. Current treatments incorporate both systemic therapy (e.g., combination chemotherapy) and specific central nervous system preventive therapy.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR ALL?

In most cases of childhood leukemia, the underlying cause remains unknown. Factors previously associated with an increased leukemia risk include:

- * Certain genetic abnormalities
- * Prenatal exposure to ionizing radiation

Other possible prenatal and postnatal risk factors suggested by some, but not all, studies include:

- * Parental smoking
- * Specific parental occupations
- * Exposure to low frequency electromagnetic fields, pesticides, or certain viruses

Proportion of California Childhood Cancer Cases Due to Leukemia, 1994-1998

