

Some ideas to help your child cope with the initial diagnosis of leukemia or lymphoma

- Provide your child with information at a level that matches his or her ability to understand. You may need to give your child information more than once. As children grow older, they may need and want to know more about their illness and treatment.
- Explain that all cancers are not the same. Many children, especially older ones, have heard of cancer. They may know of someone who has died from cancer. Children should be aware that cancers affecting older adults are different from childhood leukemia or lymphoma.
- Encourage your child to talk about fears and concerns, and answer his or her questions. Acknowledge your child's behaviors and emotions as they arise.
- Let your child know that you will stay with him or her as much as possible. If you do need to be separated from your child for a time, explain this in advance and provide him or her with other forms of support in your absence, such as phone calls and photos.
- Help your child to recognize that the doctors and nurses are working to help him or her get well, even though they may have to do things that cause pain. Explain the reasons for tests and treatments.
- Introduce your child to treatment team members who provide psychosocial support. This may include a psychologist, nurse, social worker and/or a child life specialist. These team members may be able to help you find the right words to explain the diagnosis to your child. They may also help your child to better understand information about his or her illness through medical play or other activities.
- Arrange for phone calls, emails, letters, photos and visits from friends when your child is feeling up to it.
- If possible, ask the child's teacher to make a personal phone call, send a note or visit the child.
- Understand that at times your child may act as if there were nothing wrong. You may wonder if he or she understands what is happening. It is common for children to process information in small amounts. For some children, this is a way of coping that lets them go at their own pace.

