



Pupils with Health Issues

Cancer





Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Seat pupils towards the front of the class** as cancer or treatment can affect cognitive functions i.e. attention.
2. **Encourage the rest of the class to keep in touch with the pupil undergoing cancer treatment** through cards, emails, and even visits if appropriate, to maintain contact with the school community and feel supported.
3. **Allow pupils undergoing cancer treatment to drink and eat snacks whenever they need to**, as some treatments cause dehydration, weight loss and increased hunger. Allow them to leave class five minutes early in order to get to the next class safely and in time, and allow them wear a hat in class, in case the treatment is causing hair loss.
4. **During and following radiation and chemotherapy treatments the pupil may process information and respond more slowly than usual, or may feel fatigue.** Thus the teacher should:
 - Offer extra tutoring
 - Adapt work so the pupil can manage the load, emphasising quality instead of quantity
 - Provide a scaffold that shows the steps in a task
 - Give verbal prompts and written reminders
 - Help these pupils organise their thoughts using graphic organisers and mind-maps
 - Allow the pupil to work without interruption or distraction as much as possible

[References: Cancer Council Australia (2015) *Cancer in the School Community: A guide for staff members*. ISBN 978 1925 1365 55

Cancer Child Foundation (2011) Back to School for children with cancer: Guidelines for teachers. New Zealand

http://www.childcancer.org.nz/getattachment/family-support/parent-resources/1731_b2sbrochoct11.pdf.aspx

Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (2013) Learning and living with cancer: Advocating for your child's educational needs. LLS Booklet]



School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

Class Divisions

Liaise with parents and the child's school and home medical teams in order to devise a protocol of response to medical emergencies, adapt to upcoming scheduled absences due to tests or treatments and be made aware of side-effects that might impact on appearance and behavior. Support the rest of the class to be understanding and learn how to best

support their classmate. Bear in mind that pupils who are undergoing intensive treatment such as chemotherapy may be unable to come to school; they should be able to exercise their right to home schooling, if this is within the parents' wishes.

Community

Organise a cancer awareness and education day after consulting with the pupil and her / his parents. This day can include informational sessions, fundraising and other awareness-raising activities. Avoid making specific references to the pupil and their condition as this may cause feelings of discomfort to the child and the family.

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Curricular Adaptations

1. **Allow extra time for homework and assessment tasks,** and increase time limits in tests or exams as discreetly as possible.
2. **Revise the number or types of subjects taken by the pupil.** For example, consider in collaboration with the parents and the medical team whether the pupil can attend physical education classes post radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment cycles as s/he may experience fatigue or other side-effects.
3. **Liaise with parents and the child's school and home medical teams in order to devise a protocol of response to medical emergencies,** adapt to upcoming scheduled absences due to tests or treatments and be made aware of side-effects that might impact on appearance and behavior. Support the rest of the class to be understanding and learn how to best support their classmate. Bear in mind that pupils who are undergoing intensive treatment such as chemotherapy may be unable to come to school; they should be able to exercise their right to home schooling, if this is within the parents' wishes.

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Homework

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Other (Health Measures)

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Parents / Parents' Associations

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Safety

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School Celebrations / Events / Activities

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Pupil Support

Organise an in-class buddy or teacher assistant to help with note-taking or recording assignment due dates. Also, ask for help from a social worker or psychologist if the pupil is showing signs of emotional distress, or is unable to adjust back into school.

Technology

Provide the pupil with, or allow the pupil to use a laptop to avoid motor fatigue and the challenge of handwriting, a tape-recorder to record lessons and help with memory, and a calculator to help with mathematics.

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Supportive Literature

Pediatric or Childhood Cancer

The diagnosis and treatment of pediatric cancer has both short- and long-term impacts on children and their families. Cancer affects a child's physical, psychological, and academic development. Many pediatric cancer survivors develop cognitive impairments and learning difficulties, have extensive school absences, and experience diminished academic performance; these affect the child's desire to return to school and ability to be successful in school. It is important for teachers and school personnel to recognise that they are in the position to positively impact a child's quality of life by working together to develop comprehensive and flexible educational and health plans for a pupil undergoing cancer treatment. School personnel should keep in mind that after cancer treatment has been completed, a pupil may continue to struggle with short- and long-term cognitive difficulties, as well as emotional, social, and behavioral challenges (Hay et al, 2015).

Types of childhood cancer

Leukemia is cancer of the blood cells which arise out of the bone marrow and accounts for about 40% of all childhood cancer cases. The most common of these is Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) accounts for most of the other cases.

Central Nervous System Tumours of the brain and spinal cord are the most common solid tumours in children.

Lymphomas originate from cells in the lymph nodes or other lymphatic tissues and include Hodgkin's Lymphoma and a number of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphomas.

Kidney Tumours are more likely to occur in the first five years of life.

Rhabdomyosarcoma is a cancer of the connective tissue that can arise from a number of different locations in the body.

Osteosarcoma is the most common childhood bone tumour, and often affects the long bones of the arms and legs.

Ewings Sarcoma is a tumour that occurs in the bone or the soft tissue. It often occurs in the pelvis or the leg bones.

Neuroblastoma originates in primitive nerve cells in the adrenal gland and a chain of nerves along the spine. While neuroblastoma in infancy usually has good outcomes, in older children it is more aggressive and challenging to treat.

Other Cancers: Children may also develop germ cell tumours, which arise from reproductive cells, or tumours that arise in the liver, as well as other rare forms of cancer.

Websites and EU Reports

American Cancer Society:

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/childrenandcancer/whenyourchildhascancer/children-diagnosed-with-cancer-returning-to-school>

National Cancer Institute - Children's Oncology Group (COG):

<https://childrensoncologygroup.org/index.php/school-support>

Kids with Cancer Society: <http://www.kidswithcancer.ca/cancer-in-the-classroom/>

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Hay, G. H., Nabors, M., Sullivan, A., & Zygmund, A. (2015). Students with Pediatric Cancer: A Prescription for School Success. *Physical Disabilities: Education and Related Services*, 34(2), 1-13.