Cancer Among Montana Children

**Key Findings**

About **40 children** (age 0 to 19) develop cancer in MT each year.

MT children get cancer at the same rate as all children in the U.S.

The most common types of cancer in children in MT and the U.S. are:

1. Leukemia
2. Lymphoma
3. Brain & Central Nervous System (CNS) Cancer
4. Melanoma & Epithelial Cancer

**The Burden of Pediatric Cancer in Montana**

About 40 Montana children aged 0 to 19 years are diagnosed with cancer each year. The incidence rate of cancer among Montana children (16 new cases per 100,000 children) was similar to the rate among all children in the United States (17 per 100,000) (Figure 1).

Pediatric cancers are classified by the type of cells that have become cancerous rather than the area of the body where the tumor started. The most common type of cancer among children is leukemia, cancer that starts in blood forming cells inside bone marrow. Leukemia accounts for 27% of all pediatric cancers in Montana. The next most common pediatric cancers are lymphoma (cancer that starts in immune cells called lymphocytes), brain and central nervous system (CNS) cancers, and melanoma or other cancers of epithelial cells (skin cells and cells that line the digestive system and other organs). Lymphoma, CNS cancers, and epithelial cancers account for another 44% of pediatric cancers in Montana.

**Figure 1: Age-adjusted Cancer Incidence (new cases) Rate per 100,000 Children in Montana and the United States, 2005 to 2014**

Children aged 4 or younger and adolescents aged 15 to 19 had higher incidence of cancer in Montana and the United States than children aged 5 to 14 (Figure 2). Leukemia and CNS cancers are most common among younger children in Montana. Epithelial cancers and lymphoma are most common among adolescents (Table 1).

Montana girls and boys were diagnosed with cancer at the same rate (Figure 3). There was also no significant difference in the rate of cancer among American Indian (AI) children and white children.

Table 1: Number of New Cases of Selected Cancers Within Each Age Group, Montana, 2005 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 to 4</th>
<th>5 to 9</th>
<th>10 to 14</th>
<th>15 to 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leukemia</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymphoma</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNS Cancers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epithelial Cancers</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cancer with the most cases within each age group is shaded dark gray and the next most common is shaded lighter gray.
There was no significant difference in the rate of pediatric cancers within any region of Montana compared to the state as a whole (Figure 4).

**Addressing Pediatric Cancers in Montana**

Because Montana is a rural state and there are few cases of pediatric cancer it is difficult for children with cancer to get treatment without having to travel. In fact, most Montana children with cancer (52%) travel out of state for all of their cancer treatment. This puts additional burden on children and families already dealing with an incredibly difficult situation.

The Montana Cancer Coalition Pediatric Cancer Team is working to improve access to care for Montana children who have cancer. Their goal is to ensure children with cancer are provided patient-centered treatment and survivorship services that improve quality of life. They aim to do that by increasing Montana’s capacity to provide a continuum of care for youth with cancer from diagnosis through long-term survivorship, and by increasing education on the physical, emotional, and cognitive impact of childhood cancer to schools, families, and providers.

Find resources and learn more at [www.mtcancercoalition.org/pediatric-cancer](http://www.mtcancercoalition.org/pediatric-cancer)