



Explaining Cancer to Children

What is Cancer?

- The body is made up of millions of tiny cells and is always growing new healthy cells. There are many kinds of cells in the body, like brain cells, skin cells, and hair cells. And the blood also contains cells, which flow through the body doing important things.
- When the body has cancer, it is because of unhealthy cells. These unhealthy cells grow much faster than healthy cells.

What is a tumor?

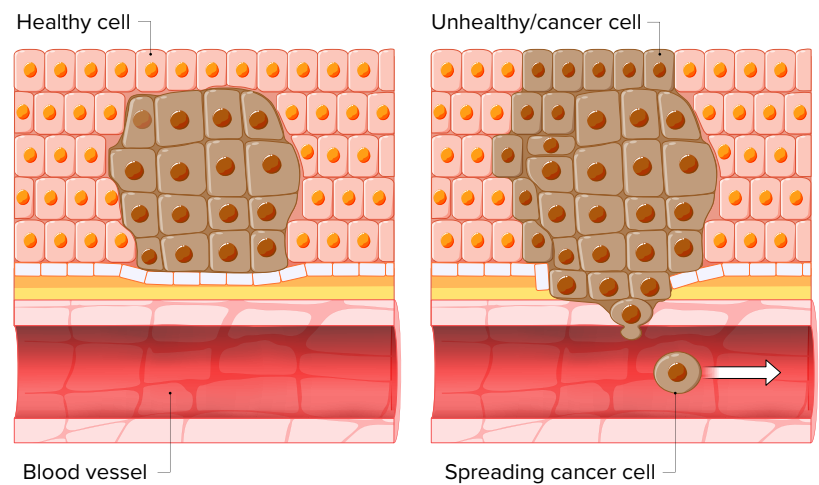
- When unhealthy cells grow, they can stick together into something called a **tumor**. A tumor is a group of cells like a ball that is not supposed to be in the body.

Discuss the "3 Cs of Cancer"

- The illness is called **Cancer**, it is not **Contagious**, and it is not **Caused** by anything the child or parent/caregiver did or did not do.
- This helps children give a name to the illness, and to realize it is different from any other illness they might see (at school or home) like the cold or the flu, and that siblings, friends, and other people cannot get cancer from them, and they did not cause it.

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

Cancer cell development



Treatment

- **Chemotherapy** (or "chemo") is a medicine that goes into the body and helps fight the cancer cells. Sometimes chemo can hurt some of the good cells too, like hair cells. When the chemo is working, it can make the person tired, sick, sad, or frustrated.
- **Radiation** is an invisible laser that helps fight the tumor. It goes through the skin to help get rid of tumor cells. The light does not hurt or feel like anything. But after the treatment, the person may be tired or feel sick to their stomach, and their skin might feel sore to touch.