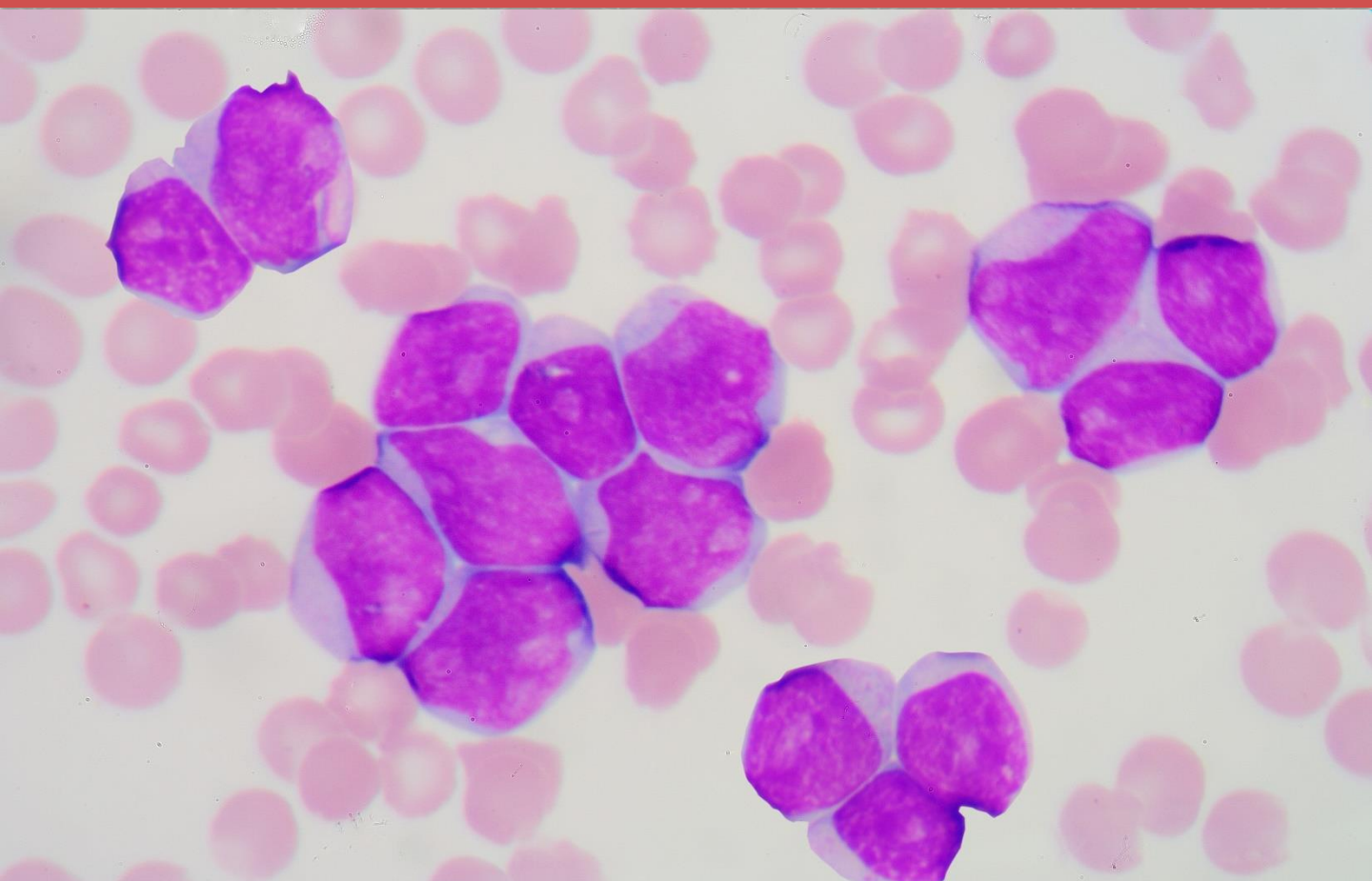


Department of
Haematology

Acute Leukaemia



What is Leukaemia

Leukaemia is a form of cancer that arises in the bone marrow, causing an uncontrolled production of abnormal white blood cells. There are two forms of leukaemia, acute and chronic.

Acute leukaemia comes on suddenly, often within days or weeks. It progresses quickly and needs to be treated urgently.

Chronic leukaemia develops more slowly, often over many months or years.

What are the Types of Acute Leukaemia?

Based on the type of white blood cells involved

Acute Myeloid Leukaemia

Myeloid cells perform different functions, such as fighting bacterial infections and defending the body against parasites.

Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia

Lymphocytes are immune cells that play a part in fighting infections by producing antibodies.

Who is at Risk?

Most patients do not have any identifiable risk. However, the more common risk factors include:

Previous history of other haematological diseases such as myelodysplastic syndrome, myeloproliferative neoplasms etc.



Previous exposure to intense radiation and certain chemicals through treatments of other cancers



Genetic abnormalities such as down syndrome



Symptoms of Acute Leukaemia

Symptoms of anaemia such as tiredness and breathlessness with mild exertion



Having more infections than usual, because of a lack of healthy white blood cells



Unusual bleeding caused by too few platelets. This may include bruising, heavy periods in women, bleeding gums, nosebleeds and blood spots or rashes on the skin



Diagnosis



A series of tests will be done by your doctor, to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of acute leukaemia. These tests may include:



- Bone marrow examination. Tissue and fluid are taken from your hip bone to determine the diagnosis, type of leukaemia and the outlook of the cancer. The process is conducted under local anaesthesia and takes about 20 minutes.



- Blood tests. These are taken throughout your treatment to monitor how you are responding and how effective your treatment is.

The test results will help your doctor prescribe a suitable treatment based on your condition.

Prognosis

The prognosis, or the likely outcome, of acute leukaemia depends on various factors such as:

- Age at diagnosis
- Specific subtype of acute leukaemia
- Genetic alterations seen inside leukaemia cells
- Response to initial treatment

Treatment Methods

Chemotherapy



- Drugs given orally or injected into the veins to kill leukaemia cells.
- Multiple cycles are administered at regular intervals to allow time for the body to recover in between cycles.

Targeted Therapy



- Drugs that are targeted towards the leukaemia cells.
- Can be used alone or together with chemotherapy.

Bone Marrow / Stem Cell Transplant



- This procedure replaces leukaemia and normal cells killed by chemotherapy with healthy donor stem cells which will develop new immune cells to continue fighting against the few remaining leukaemia cells in your body.
- Stem cells are usually taken from a healthy donor who may or may not be related to you.
- In many acute leukaemias, stem cell transplant is the only way to cure the disease.

Leukaemia Befriending Group

In Leukaemia Befriending Group, survivors reach out to newly diagnosed patients who wish to seek support and information from those with similar experiences. For more information, you can contact TTSH Medical Social Worker at 6357 8222.

Clinic 1C

TTSH Medical Centre, Level 1

Contact: 6889 4664

Clinic 5A

TTSH Medical Centre, Level 5

Contact: 6889 4747

TTSH Health Library



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Acute Leukaemia



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