

PARENTS ARE KEY TO HELPING CHILDREN TRANSITION FROM TREATMENT TO HEALTH

Parents are key to helping children transition from treatment to health

To everyone around them, a childhood cancer survivor is a hero who deserves encouragement and applause. But most kids who have struggled through treatment and conquered pediatric cancer don't want special attention – they just want to go back to a “normal” life.

According to Pam Gabris, Beyond the Cure coordinator for The National Children's Cancer Society, helping children transition from illness and treatment to health and regular living is an important task for parents and family members. While exciting and joyous, it also can be a period that calls for adult sensitivity and discernment, and possibly some help dealing with post-treatment challenges. “Children can have a wide range of emotions once treatment ends, and one of the most common is the fear that their cancer will return,” said Gabris. “Other kids may feel disconnected from their peers because of missed school and activities, and teens are particularly sensitive to being ‘different’ from their friends.”

Childhood cancer survivors may also experience anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, memory or learning difficulties. Some may cry easily; others may refuse to discuss their cancer at all, which can be problematic since most children need follow-up physician monitoring and can't pretend their illness didn't happen. Some pediatric cancer survivors may also have physical problems caused by their treatment medications or surgery.

Parents can help their children journey successfully from patient to survivor by being aware of the potential physical and emotional issues that can accompany survivorship. Resources such as the NCCS's Beyond the Cure program www.beyondthecure.org and CureSearch's Survivorship Guidelines www.survivorshipguidelines.org provide parents helpful information and solutions to the various issues that can accompany survivorship in children and teenagers. The NCCS also offers an online video on the topic, [“Embracing Survivorship.”](#)

“There are many things parents can do to help their child ease back into a cancer- and treatment-free lifestyle in healthy and appropriate ways,” said Gabris. “Understanding the issues and learning how to navigate them – including getting professional help when necessary - are the key to helping their children work through issues when they come up so they can continue successfully on their healing journey.”

Parents should seek advice from doctors, teachers and counselors if their child's behavior, emotional or learning problems are extreme or beyond the parent's ability to help, added Gabris.

For more information about understanding and navigating survivorship after pediatric cancer, visit www.beyondthecure.org and www.thenccs.org.