



## Questions to ask the doctor

- Why do you think this is a Ewing tumor?
- Is there a chance it's not a Ewing tumor?
- What will happen next?

## How does the doctor know I have (or my child has) a Ewing tumor?

Pain in a bone is the most common [symptom of a Ewing tumor](#)<sup>2</sup>. A lump or swelling in the same area can be another symptom. If symptoms of pain or swelling don't go away or get worse over time, you should go to a doctor to get it checked out. The doctor will ask questions about the symptoms and do a physical exam.

If signs are pointing to a bone tumor, [tests](#)<sup>3</sup> will be needed to find out for sure.

### Tests that may be done

**Bone x-ray:** This is often the first test done if a doctor suspects a bone tumor.

**MRI scan:** MRIs use radio waves and strong magnets instead of x-rays to make detailed pictures of your insides. MRIs make it easier to see how much tumor is in the bone and in other areas of the body. This can help the doctor plan for a biopsy (see below) and surgery.

**CT scan:** This test uses x-rays to make detailed pictures of your insides. This may be done to see if cancer has spread to the chest.

**Bone scan:** A bone scan can help show if a cancer has spread to other bones. This test is useful because it can show all of the bones at once.

**PET scan:** PET scans use a special kind of sugar that can be seen inside the body with a special camera. If there is cancer, this sugar shows up as "hot spots" where the cancer is found. This test can help show if the cancer has spread.

### Biopsy of the tumor

In a **biopsy**, the doctor takes out a small piece of the suspected tumor to check it for cancer cells. This can be done during surgery or with a thin, hollow needle. A biopsy is the only way to tell for sure if it is a Ewing tumor.

**If the tumor is in a bone, it's very important that a surgeon who treats a lot of bone tumors does the biopsy.** This might affect treatment later on.

### **Bone marrow biopsy**

If a Ewing tumor is found, this test might be done to see if the cancer has spread to the bone marrow (the inner part of some bones). For this test, a hollow needle is put into the back of the hip bones to remove some of the bone marrow, which is then checked in the lab for cancer cells.

### **Questions to ask the doctor**

- What tests will need to be done?
- Who will do these tests?
- Where will they be done?
- Who can explain them to me?
- How and when will we get the results?
- Who will explain the results to me?
- What do we need to do next?

### **How serious is the cancer?**

If you or your child has a Ewing tumor, the doctor will want to find out how far it has spread. This is called the [stage<sup>4</sup>](#) of the cancer. The stage describes the growth of the cancer in the place where it started (such as the bone). It also tells if the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. Your doctor will want to know the stage of the cancer to help decide which treatment might be best.

For Ewing tumors, what is most important is if tests show the cancer has spread to other parts of the body.

Be sure to ask the doctor about the cancer stage and what it means.

### **Questions to ask the doctor**

- Do you know the stage of the cancer?
- If not, how and when will you find out the stage?
- Would you explain to me what the stage means?

- How might the stage of the cancer affect treatment?
- What will happen next?

## What kind of treatment will I (or my child) need?

The main [treatments for Ewing tumors](#)<sup>5</sup> are:

- Chemotherapy (chemo)
- Surgery
- Radiation treatment

Chemo is almost always the first treatment. This is followed by surgery or radiation (or both), and then usually more chemo

The treatment plan will depend on:

- The stage (extent) of the cancer
- The chance that a type of treatment will cure the cancer or help in some way
- A person's age and overall health
- Concerns about [treatment side effects](#)<sup>6</sup>

### Chemotherapy (chemo)

[Chemo](#)<sup>7</sup> is the use of drugs to fight cancer. These drugs go into the bloodstream and are carried all over the body. Chemo is an important part of treatment for Ewing tumors. It is given both before surgery or radiation, and then again afterward, usually for a total of about 6 to 12 months.

Chemo is given in cycles or rounds, each of which last 2 to 3 weeks. Each round of treatment is followed by a rest break. Most of the time, 2 or more chemo drugs are given.

### *Side effects of chemo*

Chemo can make you feel very tired or sick to your stomach, and it might cause your hair to fall out. You might also have diarrhea or mouth sores. Chemo can also raise your risk of infection, bleeding, and bruising. Some chemo drugs can also harm the nerves,

bladder, or heart.

There are ways to lessen and treat most chemo side effects. Be sure to tell the cancer care team about any side effects so they can help.

## **Surgery**

[Surgery](#)<sup>8</sup> is an important part of treating most Ewing tumors. Surgery includes both the biopsy to tell for sure that it's cancer and the surgery to take out the tumor(s). The type of surgery done depends on where the tumor is and other factors. Ask the doctor what kind of surgery will be needed and what to expect.

A special doctor called an **orthopedic surgeon**, who treats problems of the muscles, joints, and bone, does the surgery.

### ***Side effects of surgery***

Any type of surgery can have risks and side effects. These can vary based on what type of surgery is done. Be sure to ask the doctor what to expect. If you have problems, let your doctors know.

## **Radiation treatments**

[Radiation](#)<sup>9</sup> uses high-energy rays (like x-rays) to kill cancer cells. It can be used after surgery to try to kill any cancer cells that might have been left behind. Or it might be used instead of surgery if all of the cancer can't be removed. Radiation can also help treat symptoms like pain and swelling if the cancer has come back and more surgery can't be done.

Getting radiation is a lot like getting an x-ray. Although the radiation is stronger, it is still painless. Treatments are usually given 5 days a week for several weeks.

### ***Side effects of radiation treatments***

If the doctor suggests radiation treatment, talk about what side effects might happen. Side effects depend on the type of radiation that's used and the area being treated. Common side effects of radiation include:

- Skin changes and hair loss where the radiation is given
- Feeling very tired

- Feeling sick to your stomach or having loose stools if the radiation is aimed at the belly area



1. [www.cancer.org/cancer/understanding-cancer/what-is-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/understanding-cancer/what-is-cancer.html)
2. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/signs-symptoms.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/signs-symptoms.html)
3. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html)
4. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/staging.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/detection-diagnosis-staging/staging.html)
5. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating.html)
6. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html)
7. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/chemotherapy.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/chemotherapy.html)
8. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/surgery.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/surgery.html)
9. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/radiation-therapy.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/radiation-therapy.html)
10. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/high-dose-chemo-stem-cell.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/treating/high-dose-chemo-stem-cell.html)
11. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/making-treatment-decisions/clinical-trials.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/making-treatment-decisions/clinical-trials.html)
12. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine.html)
13. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/follow-up.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/ewing-tumor/follow-up.html)
14. [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

## Words to know

**Biopsy** (BY-op-see): Taking out a small piece of tissue to see if there are cancer cells in it.

**Orthopedic** (or-thuh-PEE-dik) **surgeon**: A surgeon who treats diseases and injuries of the muscles, joints, and bones.

**Metastasis** (muh-TAS-tuh-sis): The spread of cancer from where it started to other places in the body.

## How can I learn more?

We have a lot more information for you. You can find it online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)<sup>14</sup>. Or, you can call our toll-free number at 1-800-227-2345 to talk to one of our cancer information specialists.

Last Revised: May 25, 2021



**Written by**

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team  
(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>)

Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as editors and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy ([www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html](http://www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html)).

**cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345**