

WHAT LIFE LOOKS LIKE FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER SURVIVORS

By: American Childhood Cancer Organization

More than 1,300 children in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer this month alone. With the treatments available today, 4 out of 5 of those children will survive. On the surface, that sounds like good news, but these numbers don't tell the whole story.

The numbers don't tell you what kids have to go through to be cancer free. And they don't tell you what life is like after childhood cancer.

Many children will face learning problems, growth problems and developmental delays that can result from years of too-harsh treatments on small, growing bodies.

They'll have endless appointments with endocrinologists, neurologists, psychologists and countless other specialists to manage the lasting effects of treatment.

Some will have psychosocial issues when they go back to school and try to resume a "normal" life after months or years spent isolated from their peers.

Some will have mental health problems like depression, anxiety and even PTSD from the trauma of childhood cancer treatment.

Many will have late effects that follow them well into adulthood, including fertility problems, secondary cancers, and increased risk of other health problems such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

And many will live with a constant, nagging fear that the cancer will return — a fear that flares with every little headache, pain or bruise.

This is what life is like for childhood cancer survivors. Two out of three childhood cancer survivors are left with a chronic illness from their treatment. The remaining third are the lucky ones, but even they will face physical, mental and emotional challenges in the years after treatment ends.

For survivors like [Abby](#), the effects of childhood cancer and its treatment are something they deal with every day. Two years after the surgery to remove her brain tumor, Abby is living with a side effect called posterior fossa syndrome, which causes her to have learning delays and bouts of anger, confusion and frustration. “She will never be the same,” says her mom, Debbie, “but no child is after a battle with cancer.”

No, the [statistics](#) don’t tell the whole story of what it’s like to be a [childhood cancer survivor](#). So while we celebrate that 4 out of 5 children will survive their diagnosis, let’s not forget that their survival comes at a price — one that they’ll pay for the rest of their lives. This National Cancer Survivors Day, let’s honor our youngest cancer survivors for all they endured, and for the many ways they continue to fight long after their cancer is gone.

The American Childhood Cancer Organization provides resources, information and support to children with cancer, survivors and their families. Honor childhood cancer survivors with a donation so they can get the critical help they need.