

## Teenage and young adult cancer deaths almost halved in last 30 years but success masks lack of access to clinical trials

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The number of teenagers and young adults dying from cancer in Britain has fallen from around 580 per year in the mid-70s (1975-77) to around 300 today (2008-2010), according to a new Cancer Research UK report.

The [cancer](#) death rates of [teenagers](#) and young adults have fallen by almost a half - from 74.5 to 37.7 per million 15-24 years old in Britain in the same time period.

But these improvements mask a lack of drug development and clinical trial access in many cancers that are seen in this age group.

The focus on specialisation in teenage and young adult care has brought increasing awareness of this group's specific needs. Experts believe that

the change in the way that some teenagers and young adults are treated - in a similar way to children rather than adults – means that they are now doing better for some cancers, such as the leukaemias.

In the last fifteen years in Britain, the largest drop in deaths was in the leukaemias - from an average of 54 deaths per year in 1995-1999 to 39 deaths in 2006-2010 in young males. In females, it fell from an average of 38 to 21 deaths per year.

Also there are now fewer young males dying from non-Hodgkin lymphoma than there used to be, dropping from an average of 20 deaths per year in 1995-1999 to 14 deaths per year in 2006-2010.

Professor Jillian Birch, a Cancer Research UK teenage cancer expert and collaborator on the report from The University of Manchester, said: "We've made great progress in helping more teenagers and young adults survive cancer, and today over 80 per cent will beat the disease. But there remains a problem with getting teenagers and young adults on to clinical trials – less than 20 per cent are on trials compared to around 50 to 70 per cent of children.

"We need to drastically improve this so that we can develop better treatments, help more teenagers and young adults survive the disease and offer hope to patients with harder to treat cancers. And this is the kind of work that the new Manchester Cancer Research Centre will work hard to do – bringing together a wide range of expertise to revolutionise cancer treatment."

Simon Davies, CEO of Teenage Cancer Trust, said: "Teenage Cancer Trust has been developing specialist services within the NHS for young people with cancer for 23 years, so it's fantastic to see such a fall in the number of young people dying from some types of cancers during this time. However, many of the rarer cancers which affect young people

like sarcomas have made little or no progress.

"More investment in rare cancer research is urgently needed. We want to work with Cancer Research UK and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure better access to clinical trials for young people with cancer".

The report, titled "[Cancer Statistics Report: Teenage and Young Adult Cancer](#)," also highlights that each year around 2,100 teenagers and young adults are diagnosed with cancer in Britain. The most common type of cancer to be diagnosed is the lymphomas (a fifth), and around two-thirds of these are Hodgkin lymphomas. For almost all types of teenage and young adult cancers the incidence is rising. Cancer remains the main cause of death from any disease in teenagers and young adults, with only transport accidents accounting for more deaths.

Dr Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "Being diagnosed with cancer is a devastating time for patients, their family and friends. More needs to be done to make treatments more effective and kinder.

"Drug development and clinical trials are at the heart of helping more teenagers and young adults both survive cancer and live a full life after their treatment. Too many [young people](#) are left out of [clinical trials](#) due to rigid age restrictions and this must change for us to continue to see improvements across all cancer types.

"But we've got to take this challenge on from different and creative angles. For example to help tackle cancers that affect children, teenagers and [young adults](#), we have teamed up with the boy band JLS. Over the next two years via the JLS Foundation, we'll raise awareness and help fund our research specifically into these cancers."

**More information:** [publications.cancerresearchuk. ...](#)

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Provided by Cancer Research UK

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