

# Children's cancer death rates drop by more than 20 per cent in 10 years

September 1 2014

UK	Mortality rate (per million)			Annual average number of deaths	
	2001-2003	2010-2012	Percentage Change	2001-2003	2010-2012
All childhood cancers	29.7	23.2	-22	328	258
Bone	1.8	1.4	-18	22	17
NHL	1.3	0.8	-35	14	10
Lymphoma	1.4	0.9	-31	15	11
Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL)	5.4	2.6	-52	63	29
Acute myleoid leukaemia (AML)	2.8	1.8	-33	30	20
Chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML)	0.2	0.1	-74	2	1
Leukaemia	9.1	4.8	-47	102	53
Liver	0.5	0.4	-26	6	4
Brain	10.0	9.0	-10	109	101

Age-standardised mortality rates take the age and size of the population into account, providing a figure for the number of children who die from cancer per million population. Looking at the numbers of children dying from the disease does not adjust for the increasing size of the UK population over the last 10 years. Therefore, the changes in the numbers of deaths will not match the

changes in rates.

The rate of children dying from cancer has dropped by 22 per cent in the last decade, according to new figures published by Cancer Research UK at the start of Children's Cancer Awareness Month.

A decade ago around 330 [children](#) in the UK died from [cancer](#) each year, but thanks to better treatments this has now dropped to around 260 each year. The steepest decline was in leukaemia, the most commonly diagnosed children's cancer, where death rates have almost halved, dropping from around 100 deaths each year to around 55.

Much of this success is due to tackling childhood cancers by combining a number of different chemotherapy drugs. Cancer Research UK played a key role in the clinical trials that proved the benefits of these combined treatments, including a large international trial that has helped lead to liver cancer death rates falling by a quarter (26 per cent) in the last decade. Research to improve imaging and radiotherapy techniques is also playing its part.

Professor Pam Kearns, director of the Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit in Birmingham, said: "It's very encouraging to see that fewer children are dying of cancer, but a lot more needs to be done. There are still a number of cancers where progress has been limited – such as brain tumours. Cancer Research UK's long-standing commitment to clinical trials for children with cancer has been a major factor in developing today's treatments and is pivotal to ongoing research that will offer new hope to the children and their families.

"Many children who survive cancer will live with the long-term side effects of their treatment that can have an impact throughout their adult

lives, so it's vital that we find kinder and even more effective treatments for them."

The new figures are announced as Cancer Research UK and TK Maxx celebrate the 10th anniversary of their partnership and the Give Up Clothes For Good campaign, the UK's biggest clothes collection. Since 2004, TK Maxx has raised £13.2m to help Cancer Research UK find ways to beat children's cancers sooner, funding research into many areas including developing better treatments that also reduce the long-term side effects for children with cancer.

To mark the occasion, TK Maxx will fund the UK's participation in an international children's cancer trial led by Professor Richard Grundy to improve survival for children and young people with a type of brain tumour called ependymoma. These tumours are often aggressive and difficult to treat and better therapies are urgently needed to improve survival and quality of life for young people and their families affected by this devastating disease.

Professor Richard Grundy, from the University of Nottingham, said: "Cancer Research UK has made [clinical trials](#) possible that have led to great improvements in treatments for childhood cancers. However, ependymoma [brain tumours](#) are exceptionally difficult to treat and survival rates remain poor.

"It's fantastic that Cancer Research UK and TK Maxx are funding this international clinical trial. Importantly, we will link our new trial to the vital lab work that will help us understand more about the disease in the hope we can help more children survive this type of brain tumour."

Around 1,600 children are diagnosed with cancer every year in the UK. Overall survival for childhood cancer has tripled since the 1960s, and three quarters of children with cancer are now cured. Cancer Research

UK has been at the heart of this progress.

Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive said, "We've made great progress in helping more and more children survive cancer than ever before, but this work is not finished – better, kinder treatments must continue to be our target. Our researchers are making great strides every year to help even more children beat the disease.

"Thanks to our unique collaboration with TK Maxx, that has raised £13.2 million since 2004, we have been able to fund life-saving research to help us understand [childhood cancers](#) and develop better treatments."

**More information:** More information on the statistics can be found here: [www.cancerresearchuk.org/cance ... gy-and-calculations/](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cance...gy-and-calculations/)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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