

As radiation therapy declined so did second cancers in childhood cancer survivors

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Greg Armstrong, MD, is an author of the paper and is the principal investigator for the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study (CCSS), a cohort of more than 35,000, designed to study the long-term effects of treatment of childhood cancer. The February 28 JAMA study utilized data from the CCSS. Credit: Seth Dixon / St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Childhood cancer survivors are living longer. Now research shows they are also less likely to develop second cancers while still young. The decline followed a sharp drop in the use of radiation therapy for treatment of childhood cancers.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the percentage of pediatric [cancer](#) patients treated with radiation fell from 77 to 33 percent. The average radiation dose also dropped. Their chance of having second cancers within 15 years of the first fell as well.

The study included 23,603 five-year survivors from the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study. The survivors were treated at 27 medical centers in the U.S. and Canada. The federally funded study is based at St. Jude. Gregory Armstrong, MD, of the St. Jude Department of Epidemiology and Cancer Control, heads the study.

"The most ominous late effect of pediatric cancer treatment is a second malignancy," he said. "This study shows efforts to reduce the late effects of treatment are paying off."

"The risk of second cancers for survivors increases with age, so it is good to see the reduction emerging early in survivorship while survivors are still young."

The research is published online in the February 28 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Provided by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

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