

# students with osteosarcoma

## What is osteosarcoma?

Osteosarcoma is the most common type of bone cancer in children and teens. It typically affects adolescents and is more common in boys. This cancer develops in bone tissue, usually forming tumors at the ends of long bones, most often near the knee. Tumors can also appear in the shoulder, pelvis, or skull and may spread to other parts of the body.

### Treatment

Standard treatment includes both surgery and chemotherapy and may take a year or longer to complete. The type of surgery depends on the tumor's location and whether it has spread. Chemotherapy is typically given weekly for the first 6–10 months, then monthly for the remainder of treatment. In addition to clinic visits, children often take chemotherapy medications at home. In more serious cases, children may be hospitalized for most of their treatment and return to school after therapy ends.

If the tumor is large and does not respond to chemotherapy, amputation of an arm or leg may be necessary. After surgery, children may use an artificial limb to regain independence. Physical and occupational therapy helps them build strength and coordination. Children with osteosarcoma will have follow-up visits every 2–3 months for up to five years after treatment.

## How can osteosarcoma affect a student at school?

Students with osteosarcoma may miss 10–20 weeks of school each year, increasing the risk of academic struggles, school avoidance, or dropping out. The most common school-related challenges for students with osteosarcoma include:

- **Academic:** frequent absences, drop in academic performance, trouble with memory, planning, and organization, delays in reading comprehension, spelling, and math, slow processing speed and difficulty keeping up with new material, visual memory challenges, possible speech and language delays, ADHD-like symptoms
- **Social/Emotional:** low self-esteem, poor body image, depression, isolation, irritability, social withdrawal, fear of new experiences, difficulty with peer relationships, loss of independence
- **Physical:** difficulties with fine motor skills, fatigue, anemia, possible vision and hearing issues, mouth sores, nausea

## How can schools support students with osteosarcoma?

### Academic

- Start academic interventions under **Section 504** or **IDEA** (Other Health Impairment).
- Assign a **manageable workload** focused on **quality over quantity**.
- Provide **extended school year** services (winter, spring, summer) if needed.
- Allow **extra time** for assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests.
- Provide **assistive technology** (computer, tablet, word processor) for note-taking and writing.

- Offer **shorter assignments** or allow oral responses for lengthy writing tasks.
- Use **organizational tools** such as checklists, planners, and visual schedules.
- Use **multi-sensory teaching methods** (visual, auditory, tactile) and repetition.
- Record lessons and offer **memory-building** activities.
- Teach **reading strategies** like using context clues and highlighting key points.
- Provide **spelling rules** and encourage verbal explanations of spelling choices.
- Review previously introduced **abstract concepts** daily before introducing new ones.
- Maintain **consistent communication** with families (emails, progress notes, conferences).

### Social and Emotional

- Allow **hats or scarves** for hair loss and provide peer sensitivity training when appearance changes occur.
- Create opportunities for **academic and social success** and highlight the student's strengths to build confidence.
- Limit **competitive activities** to reduce stress and prevent discouragement.
- Provide **counseling or emotional** support as needed.
- Offer **peer sensitivity training** to address changes in appearance after treatment.

### Physical

- Provide **two sets of textbooks** (home and school) to reduce fatigue.
- Allow **water bottles** and **snack breaks** during the day.
- Monitor the student during **physical activities** and recess.
- Offer **unrestricted bathroom access** and clinic/nurse passes.
- Modify or excuse from **strenuous physical activities** and **contact sports**.
- Allow **early dismissal** from class to avoid crowded hallways.
- Permit **rest breaks** or shortened school days as needed.
- Assign **lockers close** to classrooms or provide two lockers (e.g., upstairs and downstairs).
- Provide a **parking space** near the entrance for easy access.
- Allow **elevator access** if stairs pose a safety risk.
- Provide **mobility aids** (e.g., wheelchair, walker, crutches) if needed.

### More Resources

- **American Cancer Society**  
[cancer.org/](https://www.cancer.org/)
- **Going to School During and After Cancer Treatment**  
[cancer.org/cancer/childhood-cancer/](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/childhood-cancer/)
- **National Cancer Institute**  
[cancer.gov/](https://www.cancer.gov/)

### SCHOOL SERVICES

For more information, visit [childrens.com/school-services](https://www.childrens.com/school-services)

