

site may be the initial sign in solid tumors. In addition, a mass is a typical finding in children with solid tumors. An abdominal mass in a child must be evaluated for a malignancy, such as Wilms tumor or neuroblastoma.

Fever is a frequent occurrence during childhood and is caused by numerous illnesses, including cancer. The cause of fever in cancer patients is infection or the malignant process itself. A careful skin assessment will reveal signs and symptoms of a low platelet count. Ecchymosis and petechiae are most commonly found on the child's extremities and under constricting parts of clothing like waistbands. Spontaneous gum or nose bleeding may occur when the platelet count falls below 20,000/mm³.

The child with malignant invasion of the bone marrow often appears pale, with symptoms of lethargy, weight loss, and generalized malaise. These symptoms may be attributed to anemia caused by the replacement of normal cells with malignant cells in the bone marrow. The nurse should assess for signs and symptoms of anemia (see [Chapter 24](#)).

Swollen lymph glands are another common finding in children. However, enlarged, firm lymph nodes in a child with fever for more than 1 week, a recent history of weight loss, or an abnormal chest x-ray film may indicate a serious disease and should be evaluated further.

The presence of a white reflection as opposed to the normal red pupillary reflex in the pupil of a child's eye is the classic sign of retinoblastoma. Squinting, strabismus, or swelling can indicate other solid tumors of the eye.

The child with a brain tumor develops signs and symptoms according to the exact area of the brain involved. The nurse must perform a thorough neurological assessment to identify the specific area of tumor involvement.

Managing Side Effects of Treatment

Cancer care encompasses more than treatments aimed at eliminating the malignant cells. Because of the delicate balance between killing malignant cells and preserving functional cells, supportive therapy is frequently needed during those times that serious damage occurs to normal body tissues. A major concern for