

Ewing Sarcoma: Risk Factors



What is a risk factor?

A risk factor is anything that may increase your chance of having a disease. Risk factors for a certain type of cancer might include age, gender, family history, smoking, diet, or many other things. The exact cause of someone's cancer may not be known. But risk factors can make it more likely for a person to have cancer.

Things you should know about risk factors for cancer:

- Risk factors can increase a person's risk, but they do not necessarily cause the disease.
- Some people with risk factors never develop cancer. Other people can develop cancer and have few or no risk factors.
- Some risk factors are very well known. But there is ongoing research about risk factors for many types of cancer.

Who is at risk for Ewing sarcoma?

Although Ewing sarcoma is rare, anyone can get it. There are only a few factors known to increase risk for Ewing sarcoma. They include the following:

- **Age.** Ewing sarcoma is most common in older children and teens. This cancer is less common in younger children and young adults. It's rare in older adults.
- **Chromosomal changes.** Most Ewing sarcoma cells have EWSR1 gene changes located on chromosome 22. This happens when there's a swap (translocation) of pieces of genetic material between chromosomes 22 and 11. It can occur between chromosomes 22 and 21 but less often. The chromosomal changes cause the EWSR1 gene to be turned on. This can lead to growth of too many cells and the development of Ewing tumors.
- **Race and ethnicity.** Whites (both Hispanic and non-Hispanic) have the highest risk for Ewing sarcoma of all racial groups in the U.S. It's less common in Asian Americans and is rare in African Americans.
- **Gender.** Males have a slightly higher risk of Ewing sarcoma than females.

Ewing sarcoma doesn't seem to be strongly linked to family history. This means the risk isn't inherited from a person's parents. And there are no environmental or lifestyle factors that are known to increase Ewing sarcoma risk.

What are your risk factors?

If you're concerned about your risk (or your child's risk) of Ewing sarcoma, talk with your healthcare provider. Unfortunately, the known risk factors for Ewing sarcoma aren't under your control.

But there might be things you can do that could help find this type of bone cancer early. This is when it might be easier to treat. For instance, tell your healthcare provider about any sort of abnormal lump, pain, or swelling, especially if it doesn't go away. Also let your healthcare provider know if you (or your child) have a persistent sensation of warmth or pain in a limb, especially if it doesn't go away.

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