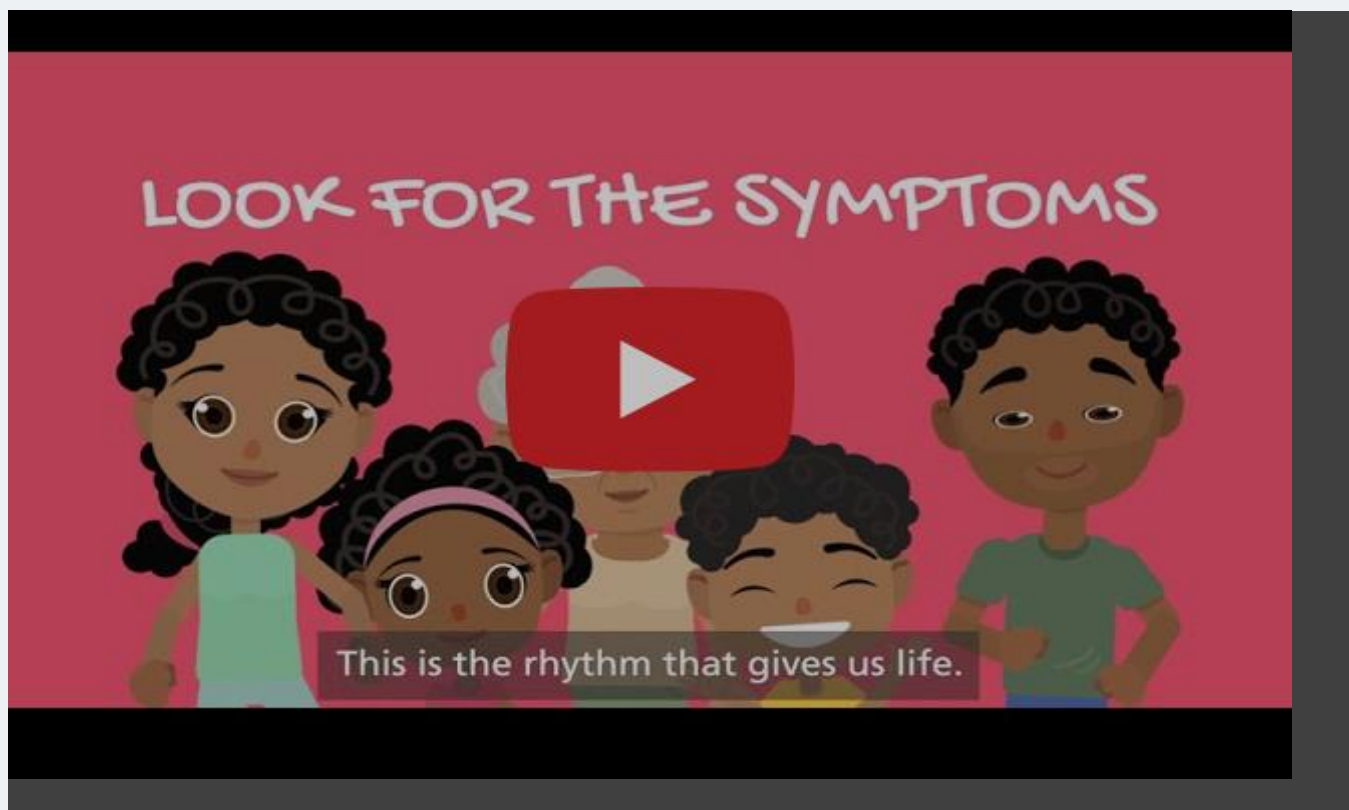




PAHO launches campaign to raise awareness of childhood cancer in Latin America and the Caribbean

While treatment prognosis is high in children, survival rates vary between 20-80% in the region due to delays in diagnosis, lack of specialized care and limited access to cancer medicines.



Washington, DC, 14 February 2023 (PAHO) – A new campaign launched by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and Childhood Cancer International aims to alert parents, caregivers, and

health professionals in Latin America and the Caribbean about the first signs of the most common cancers in children and adolescents to improve timely diagnosis and treatment outcome.

The campaign, '[Support Kids with Cancer](#)', launched on the eve of International Childhood Cancer Day (15 February) seeks to raise awareness of the most common types of pediatric cancer, including lymphoblastic leukemia, Hodgkin lymphoma, and retinoblastoma, among others. Some of the common symptoms include fatigue, unexplained bruising, lumps or swelling, loss of appetite, persistent headache, dizziness and vomiting, and bone pain.

"In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly 29,000 children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer each year," Dr. Anselm Hennis, Director of the Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health Department at PAHO, said. "While the overall regional survival rate for childhood cancer currently stands at 55%, this varies significantly from country to country."

In lower income countries of the region, children and adolescents experience survival rates as low as 20%, whereas those in higher income countries face much different odds of survival, reaching up to 80%. This is primarily due to delays in diagnosis, lack of specialized care, limited access and availability of essential cancer medicines and preventable mortality due to infections.

"While childhood cancer cannot be prevented, most types can be cured if detected early," Dr. Hennis said. "Providing parents and caregivers with the information they need to raise the alarm, is crucial to ensuring timely diagnosis."

The campaign features an animated video and a song, which highlights the symptoms of common childhood cancers in an easy-to-remember way. It also provides information on what to do if a concerning symptom is present.

"The campaign is an excellent way to provide parents, caregivers, teachers, and primary care providers with crucial and comprehensive information on the signs of childhood cancer", Dr. Daniel Bastardo, Manager of the St Jude Together program for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, said.

Childhood cancer

In Latin America and the Caribbean, one in every 360 children and adolescents is diagnosed with cancer each year, yet less than half of all countries in the region (46%) have a national policy for the early detection of cancer, including childhood cancers.

The most common types include acute lymphoblastic leukemia, Burkitt lymphoma, Hodgkin lymphoma, Wilms tumor, retinoblastoma and low-grade glioma, which account for up to 60% of all childhood cancers.

“The six most common childhood cancers have unique characteristics, with detectable early signs and symptoms, and are highly curable with proven therapies,” notes Marcela Zubieta, Head of the Latin American network at Childhood Cancer International. “This is why getting the information out to parents via this campaign is so vital.”

International Childhood Cancer Day is a global campaign that takes place each year on February 15 to raise awareness of childhood cancer and to support children and adolescents with cancer, survivors and their families.

Links

- [Campaign page: Support kids with cancer- Early Diagnosis of Childhood Cancer](#)
- [Childhood Cancer \(PAHO topic page\)](#)
- [CureAll Americas](#)
- [ST JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL](#)

Resources for health professionals

- [Early diagnosis of cancer in childhood and adolescence](#)
- [Nutritional Guide for pediatric cancer \(in Spanish\)](#)
- [Palliative Care in Pediatric Cancer \(in Spanish\)](#)
- [Oncology nursing in Latin America and the Caribbean \(in Spanish\)](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.