A cancer diagnosis can significantly disrupt or delay achieving these milestones

Teenagers are under-represented in the National Cancer Registry and the South African Children's Cancer Registry. So the true incidence is not known but is certainly higher

SA has a lack of teenager specific wards, with no clear guidelines for when to transition children to oncology adult care, which has an impact on oncology care

Going into an adult ward can be really difficult and distressing for the teenager especially after the relatively protective environment of the childhood ward

What teens have to deal with:

- Identity formation
- Education and career planning
- Puberty and body image concerns
- Acceptance from peers
- Evolving family relationships and more
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Cancer in Teenagers
in South Africa

Impact of a Cancer Diagnosis on the Teenager

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Poor self-esteem
- Impact on socialisation
- Loss of purpose
- Relationship issues
- Concerns over future fertility
- Difficulty with schoolwork
- Physical changes
- Body image
- Fear of death
- Lack of interest
- Long periods away from home & school
- Cut off from peers

“I don’t like to be in hospital because I miss home. I miss my siblings, my friends, my teachers and fellow pupils, and I miss my studies too.”
- 14 year old girl, Bochum, Limpopo, Acute Lymphocytic Lymphoma

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Communication
▶ Be respectful, clear, and non-judgmental
▶ Allow adequate time to process and discuss
▶ Be compassionate, sensitive, and honest to reduce anxiety & fear
▶ Teens prefer electronic in addition to written info
▶ Create opportunities to meet other survivors

Decision-making and Disclosure
▶ Involve the teen patient in decision making
▶ Many teens want sole responsibility for smaller decisions
▶ Many are happy to share decision making for more critical medical decisions with their parents

Treatment Outcomes
▶ Most teens don’t raise the issue of prognosis with their parents or health-care team
▶ This does not mean that thoughts, worries about life expectancy and cancer progression are not active concerns for teenagers
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How CANSA makes a difference

CANSAs Tough Living with Cancer (TLC)

children’s support programme embraces a holistic approach to include the
emotional and social well-being of parents (guardians), children / teens and their
siblings. CANSA TLC also offers support to the child who has a parent or sibling
that has been diagnosed with cancer who sometimes has become a caregiver.

We offer the following services*
▶ sharing cancer related information
▶ counselling services and support groups
▶ providing terminal and grief support
▶ volunteer training
▶ hospital support and ward programmes
▶ prosthetic assistance (loss of an eye or limb)
▶ ports (broviacs) to minimise trauma and other medical equipment
▶ school and community awareness and education programmes
▶ providing accommodation for parents (guardians) near treatment centres
  at our CANSA TLC Lodges – Polokwane, Pretoria, Durban
▶ providing food & basic essentials parcels to families in need

*Please note that services will vary in different provinces

“Life forced me to be strong at a very young age. Having a support system as your
family and friends is important. I wish the world could have more fathers like Chief,
those who will support you every step of the way.”
- Girl, diagnosed with Leukaemia at 15, now 22. Batho, Mangaung

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