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Sarcoma Alliance Fact Sheet

What is Sarcoma?

Simply stated: a rare and aggressive cancer

1. Sarcoma is a rare cancer of the connective tissue. Connective tissue includes soft tissue (muscle, fat, nerves, blood vessels, and cartilage) and bone. Connective tissue connects, supports, or surrounds other structures and is present throughout the body. Thus, sarcoma can occur in any location.
2. There are about 10,000 new cases of sarcoma each year in the U.S.
3. More than 50 subtypes have been identified, all of which require different types of treatment.
4. Sarcoma strikes men and women. It represents 20 percent of childhood cancers and 1 percent of adult cancers.
5. Sarcoma is often misdiagnosed and is very difficult to treat.
6. In the early stages of the disease, there might be no symptoms. Sarcoma can manifest as a painless lump or swelling.
7. Sarcoma can spread (metastasize) rapidly to the lungs and other parts of the body, making this a very dangerous form of cancer.
8. It is very important for sarcoma patients to be seen by providers at medical centers with expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease.
9. The cause for many sarcomas is unknown, but exposure to some chemicals and high-dose radiation therapy are risk factors. There are some genetic risk factors as well.
10. The most common treatment for sarcomas is surgery; radiation therapy and chemotherapy may also be recommended.

What is the Sarcoma Alliance?

A nonprofit organization that provides education, support, and guidance

1. An international organization founded by sarcoma survivors to guide, educate, and support everyone affected by sarcoma: patients, caregivers, families, and friends
2. Provides accurate and up-to-date information about sarcoma on its website and by phone, email, and mail
3. Online services include a discussion board and a twice-weekly chat / support group
4. Sponsors support groups and provides assistance to others in starting one
5. Offers a peer-to-peer program matching individuals, one-on-one, for education and support
6. Provides information on where to receive the best treatment and offers financial assistance so that people can seek a second opinion from sarcoma experts
7. Provides information on clinical trials
8. Distributes a newsletter with information about sarcoma and events
9. Advocates to governmental agencies and Congress to assure funding for research and treatment