July is Sarcoma Cancer Awareness Month

Sarcoma refers to cancers that develop in connective tissues such as bones, cartilage, muscles, tendons, fibrous tissues, veins, arteries, nerves, skin, and fatty tissues.\(^1\) Sarcomas are not common and make up about one percent of all new cancer cases. Almost 13,000 adults and children are diagnosed with sarcoma in the U.S. each year. Approximately 7,240 males and 5,510 females will be diagnosed with soft tissue sarcoma and an estimated 3,500 people will be diagnosed with bone cancer in 2019.\(^1,2,3\)

The two main types of sarcoma include soft tissue sarcomas and bone cancers. These are divided into subtypes based on surrounding tissue, the cell type, or area of the bone affected. **Soft tissue sarcomas** involve “tissues that connect, support, or surround other structures and organs of the body”\(^4\) such as muscles, tendons, fibrous tissues, fat, nerves, blood vessels, and tissues around joints. **Bone cancers** or “osseous sarcomas” originate in the bone.\(^1\)

**Risk Factors**

Sarcoma risks include inherited or family cancer syndromes, radiation therapy for cancer, an abnormal immune system, a damaged lymph system with chronic swelling (lymphedema), chemical exposures, and viruses like human herpes virus 8 and specific strains of human papillomavirus.\(^2,3,5\)

**Treatments**

Sarcoma treatment options take into account the type, stage, and grade of the cancer (how quickly the cancer will grow and spread), possible side effects, patient’s preference, and overall health. Surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, targeted therapy (targeting a specific gene or protein), and immunotherapy (using a person’s immune system to attack specific cells), or a combination may be used. Bone transplants and metallic implants may be options for bone cancer treatment.

**Resources**

The **Georgia Cancer Center** provides specialized treatment for bone and soft tissue cancers. [augustaehealth.org/georgia-cancer-center/types-of-cancers-we-treat/bone-cancer/treatment--bone-cancer](augustaehealth.org/georgia-cancer-center/types-of-cancers-we-treat/bone-cancer/treatment--bone-cancer)

The **Sarcoma Foundation of America (SFA)** offers web-based information to patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. A list of sarcoma subtypes is available. [curesarcoma.org/patient-resources/sarcoma-subtypes](curesarcoma.org/patient-resources/sarcoma-subtypes)

The **American Cancer Society (ACS)** gives details about soft tissue sarcoma, risk factors, early detection diagnosis, staging, treatment, statistics, and research. [cancer.org/cancer/soft-tissue-sarcoma/about.html](cancer.org/cancer/soft-tissue-sarcoma/about.html)

The **National Cancer Institute (NCI)** provides abundant information about adult and childhood sarcoma. Topics include general information, cellular classification, staging, treatments, research, and clinical trials. [cancer.gov/types/soft-tissue-sarcoma/hp/adult-soft-tissue-treatment-pdq](cancer.gov/types/soft-tissue-sarcoma/hp/adult-soft-tissue-treatment-pdq)

“The C Word” is a news brief of the Georgia Cancer Center at Augusta University. For cancer info visit: [augusta.edu/cancer/community](augusta.edu/cancer/community). To request exhibits or speaking engagements, contact Christine O’Meara, Director, Cancer Information and Awareness at comeara@augusta.edu or 706-721-8353.

1. Seattle Cancer Care Alliance [seattlecca.org/diseases/sarcoma/sarcoma-facts](seattlecca.org/diseases/sarcoma/sarcoma-facts)
4. Sarcoma Foundation of America [curesarcoma.org/patient-resources/sarcoma-subtypes](curesarcoma.org/patient-resources/sarcoma-subtypes)

55 July 2019