

Childhood cancer survivors are not more likely to terminate their pregnancies

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Female childhood cancer survivors face a lower likelihood of becoming pregnant than women in the general population, but once pregnant, they are not more likely to undergo an abortion. The findings come from a new study published early online in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society.

Cancer survivors might be reluctant to start a family due to concerns for their children's health as well as the potential recurrence of their own cancer. This could lead to a greater likelihood of induced abortions in female survivors who become pregnant.

To examine whether pregnancies of childhood [cancer survivors](#) are more likely to end with induced abortions, Johanna M. Melin, MD, Ph.D., of the Finnish Cancer Registry in Helsinki, Finland, and her colleagues examined data from Finnish registers on cancer, births, and induced abortions.

When the researchers compared 420 first pregnancies of childhood cancer survivors with 2,508 first pregnancies from the [general population](#) in 1987 to 2013, survivors had a 28 percent lower probability of becoming pregnant compared with women in the general population, but their risk of a first pregnancy resulting in an induced abortion was similar.

"Our study shows that the risk of terminating a pregnancy is similar in childhood cancer survivors and population controls, suggesting that female childhood cancer survivors are as willing as their peers to continue the pregnancy and become parents," said Dr. Melin. "Also, research has found no [increased risk](#) for congenital anomalies in children born to cancer survivors. In our study, termination of pregnancy due to congenital anomaly or birth defect of the fetus was very rare in childhood cancer survivors."

Dr. Melin noted that the reduced probability of pregnancy in childhood [cancer](#) survivors seen in this study highlights the persisting need for interventions to preserve patients' fertility during treatment. This supports the American Cancer Society's Preserving Fertility in Female Cancer Patient initiative.

More information: "Risk of induced abortions in childhood cancer survivors." Johanna M. Melin, Viivi I. Seppänen, Tiina M. Ylöstalo, Nea K. Malila, Janne M. Pitkaniemi, Mika Gissler, and Laura-Maria S. Madanat-Harjuoja. *Cancer*; Published Online: January 25, 2021, [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.33384](#)

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