



Changes in your blood

A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander patients and their families

Book One
Text & Illustrations by Simone Thomason



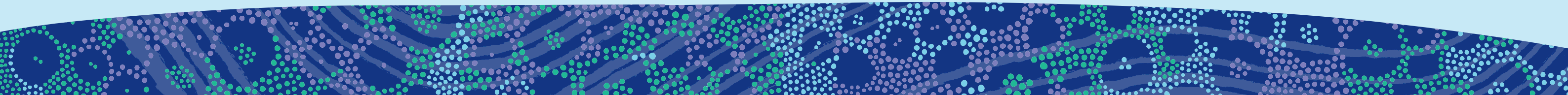
Leukaemia
Foundation®

The author sincerely acknowledges and pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Traditional Owners, past, present and emerging, on whose land these booklets have been developed and gives thanks for their on-going willingness to share their knowledge and wisdom.

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Changes In Your Blood, A Booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families, is Book One in a series of five educational booklets. The booklets are primarily visual teaching tools, designed to meet the comprehension needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, diagnosed with a blood cancer, and their families. This resource may also benefit all patients, including cultural and linguistically diverse people groups whose main language is not English.

Disclaimer: This booklet is not intended to provide or be a replacement for medical advice.
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The Leukaemia Foundation uses real-life stories to provide education, inspiration and hope. If you have an experience of blood cancer you'd like to share, please email storyhub@leukaemia.org.au

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Have you been sick lately?

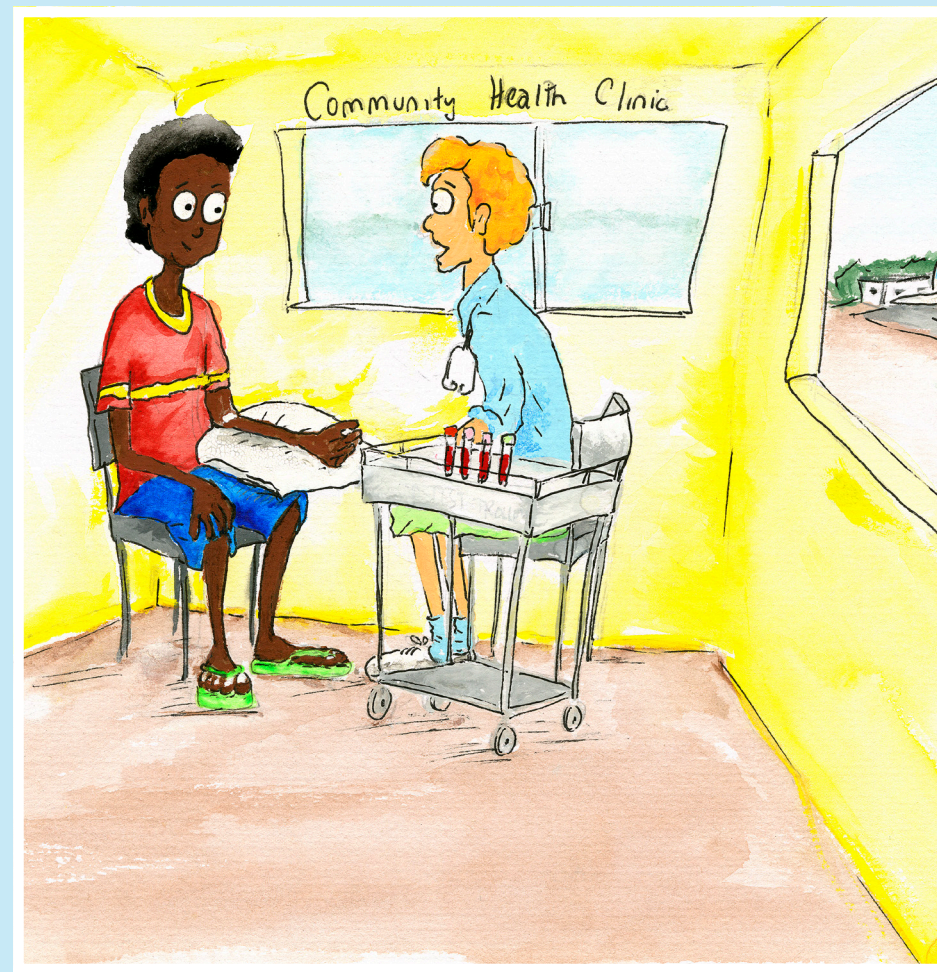
Have you felt lumps in your neck, under your arms or inside the top of your legs?

Have you been sleeping lots?

Are you getting short of wind when you are walking around?

Are you bruising or bleeding anywhere?

Don't feel shame, go to the health clinic for a check-up.



Talk with the workers at the health clinic

Tell them if you have:

- Felt lumps in your body
- Are sleeping a lot
- Getting short of wind
- Have bruises or are bleeding anywhere.

They will do a blood test.

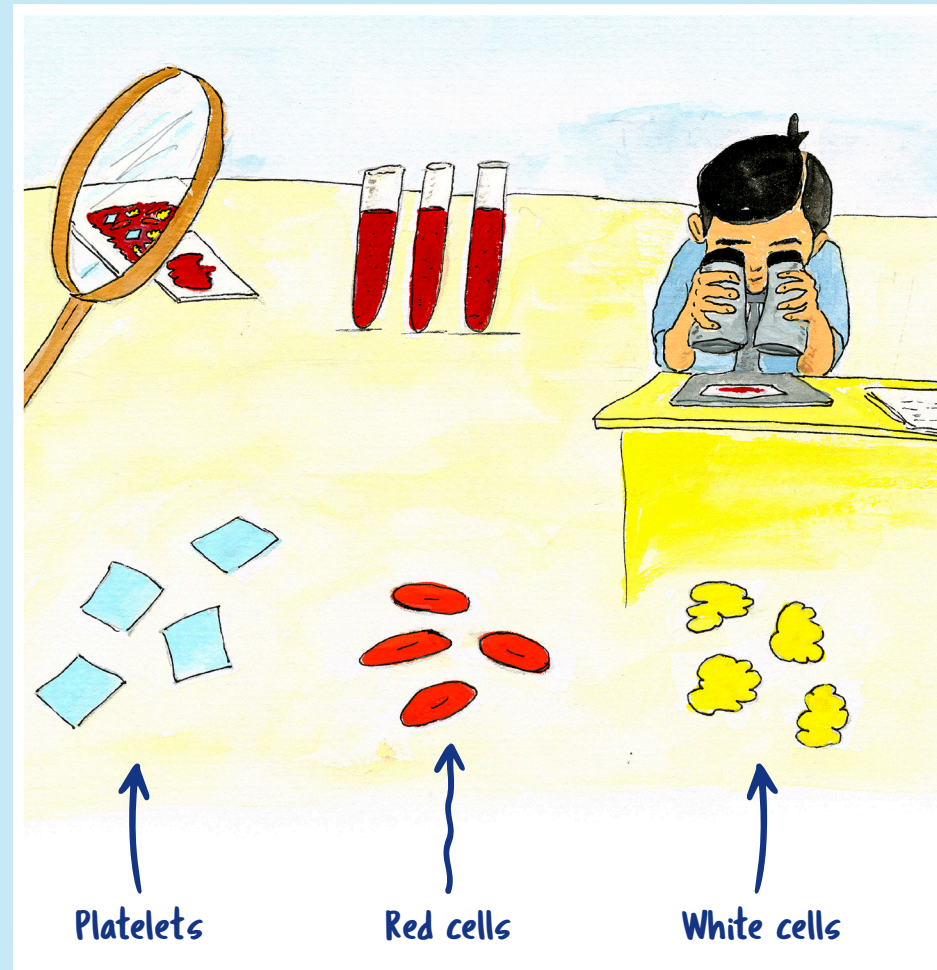
Your blood tells the story about how well you are.

Inside your blood

Your blood is made of many tiny shapes called 'cells'.

These cells are so small you cannot easily see them.

When doctors test your blood they use a special machine to see these blood cells.



Cells in your blood

Your blood has three types of blood cells. They have different jobs to do to keep you strong and well.

Platelets:

Stop the bleeding if you cut yourself.

Red cells:

Carry the wind you breathe into your lungs and around your body to make it work and move.

White cells:

Fight against germs and stop you getting sick from infections.

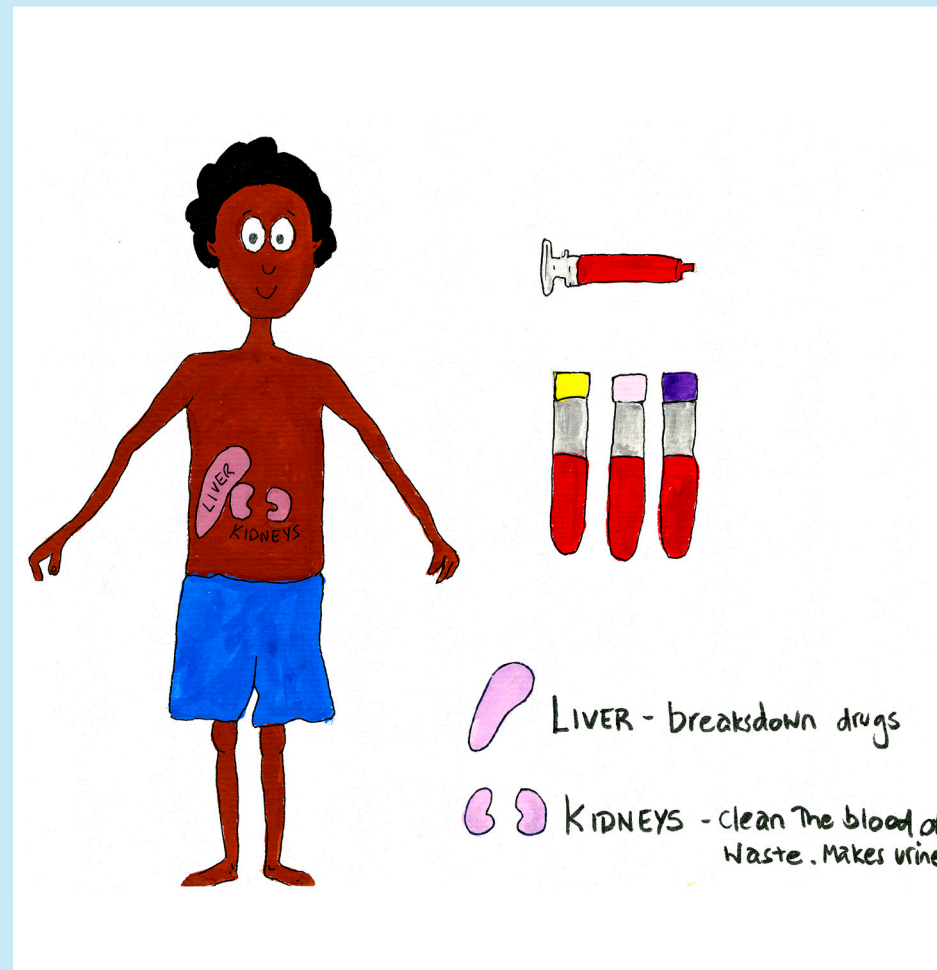
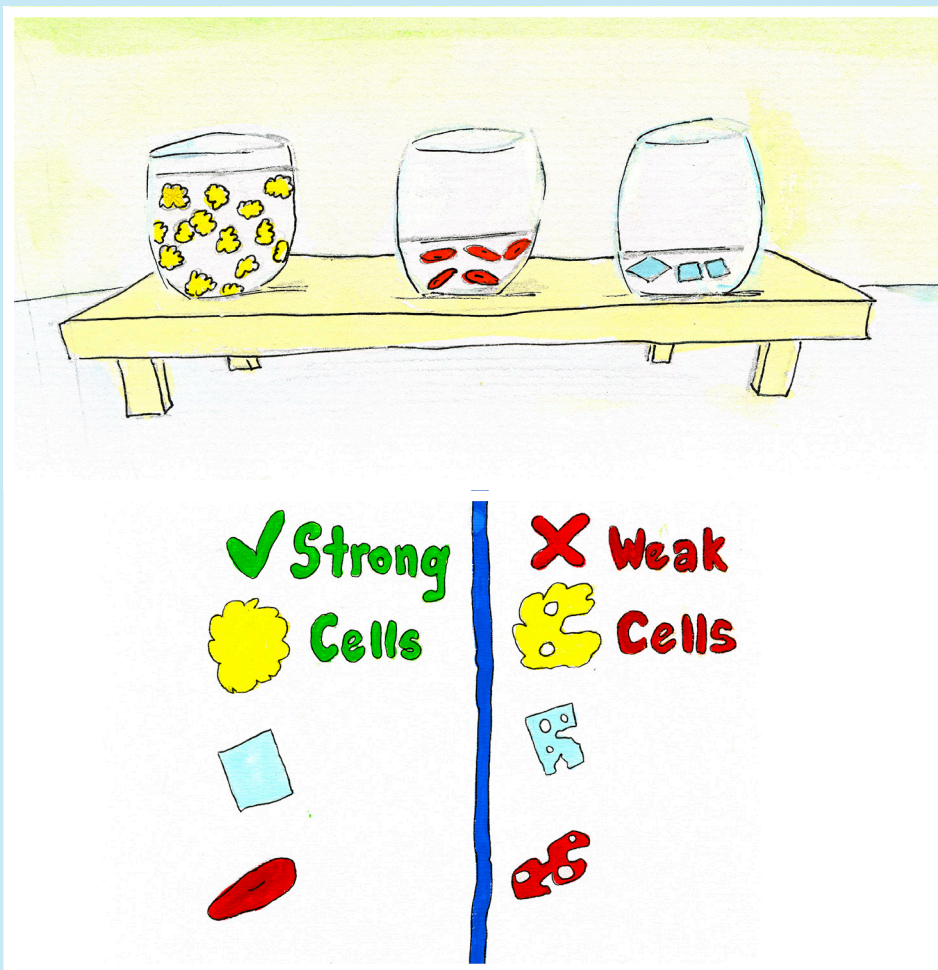
Looking at cells in your blood

Doctors count how many different types of blood cells you have.

They look at the shape of your blood cells, to see if they look weak or strong.

When cells are weak, they may have holes in them or their shape may have changed.

When cells change like this, they don't work right and this can make you sick.



What else does a blood test do?

Blood tests can show how well your liver and kidneys are working.

The liver's job is to break down medicine and foods for your body to use.

The kidneys clean your blood and get rid of the rubbish in the urine (pee).

More cells in your body

There are many cells everywhere in your body.

They all have different jobs to do.

Cells all fit together in your body to make your body strong like bricks fit together in a house.



Sick cells

When cells in your body or blood get weak, you get sick.

Just like when the bricks in a house get weak, the house can get sick and fall down.

What's next?

When your blood tests show changes, you will be asked to leave country and go into the city hospital. There you will have more test to learn why these change are happening for you.

It can take a while to get all the tests done, so you may need to be in the city hospital for days or weeks.

You can take a family member with you.

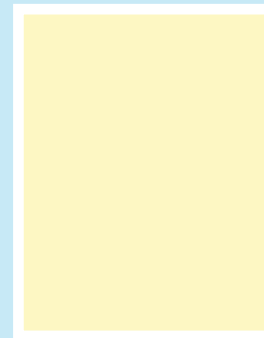
In hospital you will meet special blood doctors and nurses.



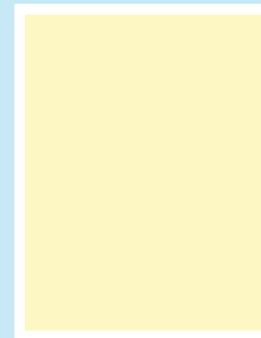
When you are in hospital

The hospital staff can help you and your family with any questions or worries you have.

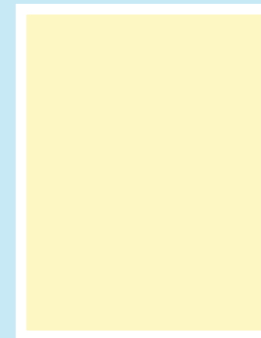
There are many staff who can sit and chat with you too:



ILLO's
(Indigenous Liaison officers)



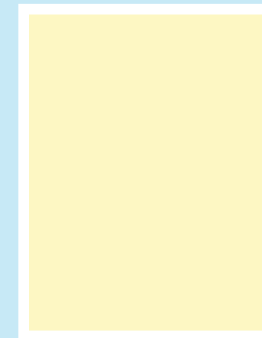
Church Ministers:



Your Language Speakers
(Interpreters)



Blood Nurses



Social Workers
(Help with money and Centrelink)

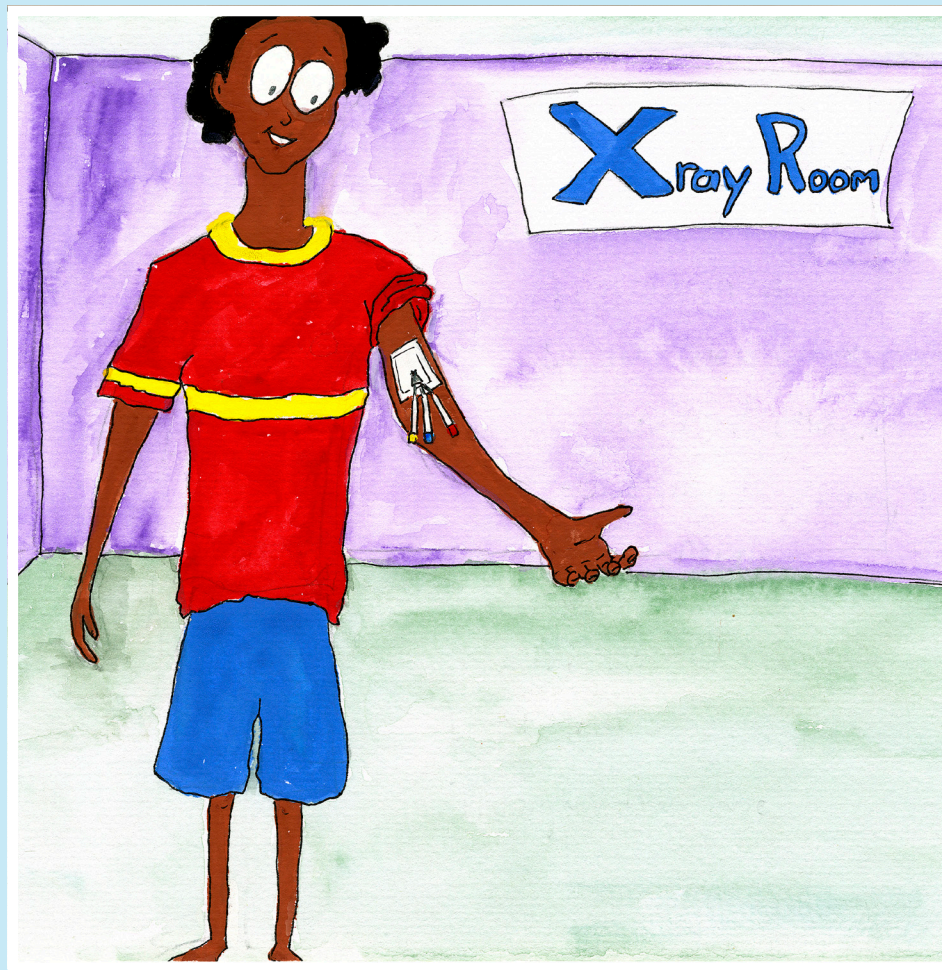
Blood tests every day

When you are in hospital you will need to have a lot of blood tests.

A special tube, called a PICC line, will be put into your arm, so you can have blood tests without needles.

The mob in X-ray will put this in for you.

You can also be given medicines and bags of special water into the PICC line.



Lumps in your body

The X-rays can show if you have special lumps inside your body.

The doctors may need to test a small piece of a lump, to see what is inside it.

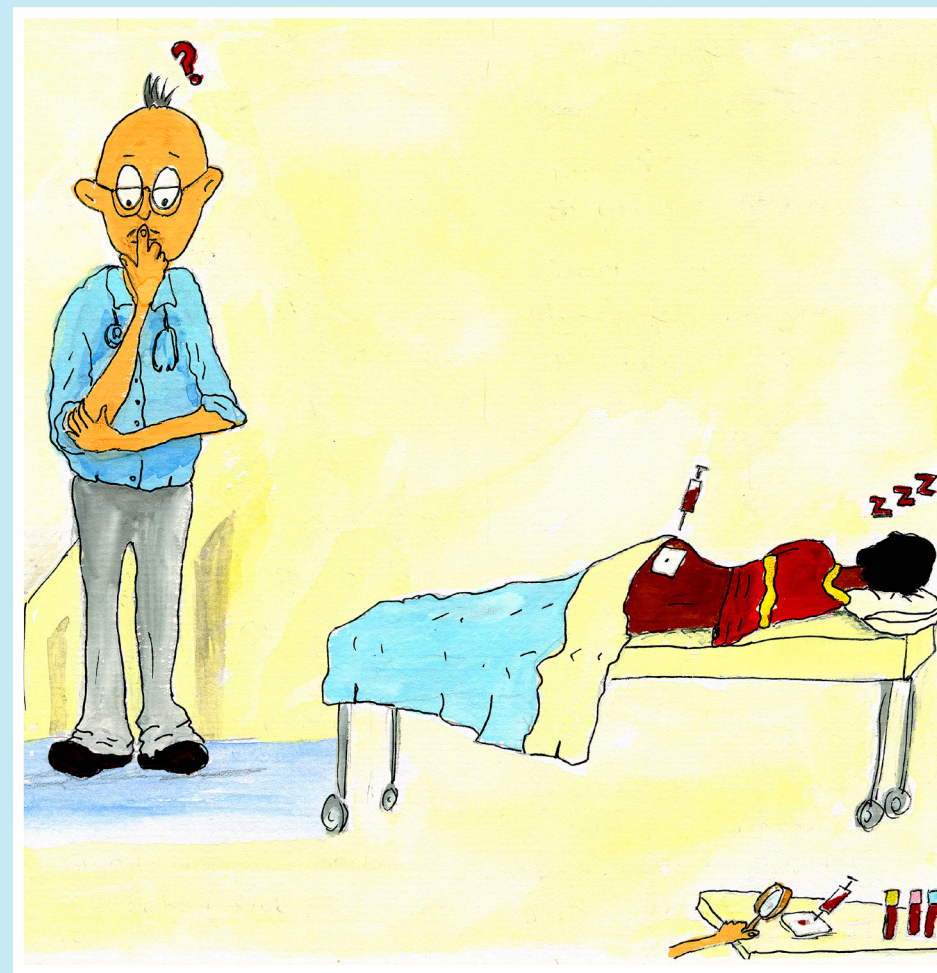
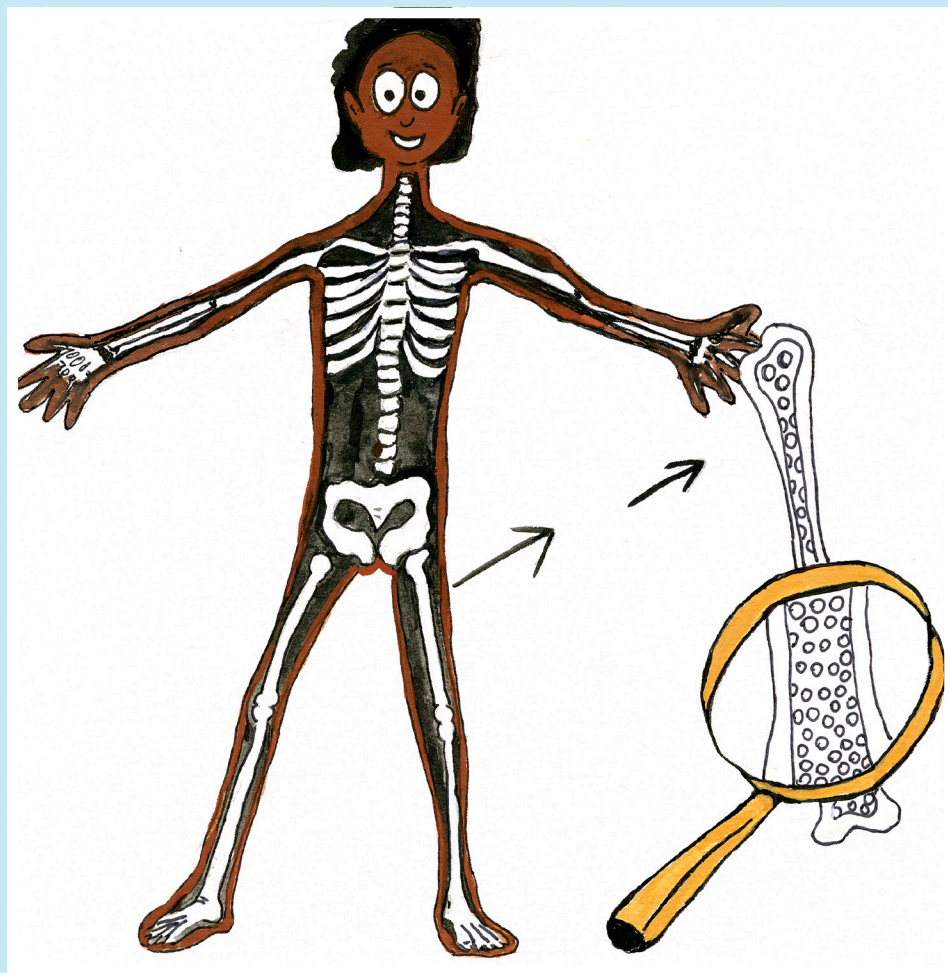
Before they do this, they will give you medicine into the lump so it goes numb and does not hurt you.

Young blood cells

Inside your bones, are many tiny holes called the 'bone marrow'.

Inside your bone marrow is where your body's young blood cells are made and grow.

When these cells are older, they move from your bones into your blood and go to work.



A bone marrow test (biopsy)

To help the doctors learn more about your young blood cells, you will need to have a bone marrow test.

This test is done from your hip bone.

You will be given medicine to put you to sleep for this test. You will feel a small needle sting in your hip at the start, then it will go numb.

The test takes only a few minutes, then you sleep for a while.

Spine fluid test- lumbar puncture

Some blood cells can move into your spine and make you unwell.

To know if this has happened to you, you can be asked to do a spine fluid test.

The fluid inside your spine looks like yellow water.

At the start of the test you will feel a small needle sting in your back.

This test usually takes 5-10 minutes. Then you lie in bed flat for a few hours, to stop any headaches.



Common questions

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Abbreviations and references

Cells - are small shapes found inside your body which have special jobs to do to keep you well and strong.

Blood Nurse (Cancer Care Coordinator) - a member of the team who works with patients with blood changes and their families.

Bone marrow - the holey area inside large bones, where young blood cells are made and grow.

Bone marrow biopsy - a test of the fluid and cells inside the bone marrow.

CT Scan - (Computer Topographic Scan) is a special X-ray that shows pictures of the soft and hard areas inside your body.

Haematologist - specialist blood doctor.

ILO/Indigenous Liaison Officers – are staff members who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families.

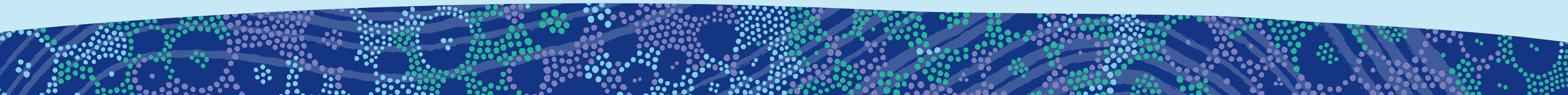
Interpreters - special language speakers.

Lumbar puncture - test of the fluid inside your spine.

Leukaemia Foundation and support workers - an organization which supports patients and families diagnosed with a blood cancer

PET scan - (Positron Emission Topography) is a special X-ray that shows which parts inside your body are making a lot of new cells.

PICC line/tube (Peripherally inserted central catheter) is a special plastic tube which goes into your vein in your upper arm.



Platelets – blood cells which stop the bleeding if you cut yourself.

Red blood cells – carry the wind you breathe into your lungs and around your body, to make it work and move.

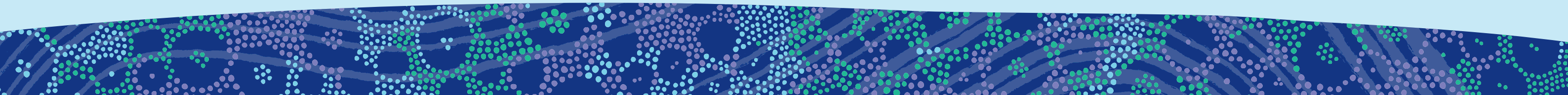
Social worker - a member of the team who helps with your physical, financial and social wellness.

White blood cells - fight against germs and stop you getting sick from infections.

References:

Cancer Institute of NSW (2020) Retrieved from www.eviq.org.au

Leukaemia Foundation (2020) Retrieved from www.leukaemia.org.au



End of Book One

We hope this book has helped you and your family learn about:

- Why the doctors test and look at your blood.
- What cells are, what they do and how they make our bodies strong.
- Why the doctors do other tests, X-rays and scans.
- Why you need to stay in the hospital for awhile, for the tests.
- Why doctors put a special tube in your arm.

Please read Book Two to learn about the test results.

