



AVA
HAS A TUMOUR

YOUNG LIVES
vs CANCER

For George



AVA HAS A TUMOUR

Version 5

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For information about the sources used to create this book, or if you have any comments or questions about it, please contact us at brand@younglivesvscancer.org.uk.



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Meet **Ava**

This is Ava. She's nine years old and lives with her mum, her dad and her brother Oliver, who's seven.

She likes dancing and karate, and her favourite thing to do is play with her best friend Sophie and Sophie's two kittens.

Recently, Ava hasn't been very well. This book is about what happened to her.

More info

While you're reading Ava's story, you'll sometimes see a box like this. This is where you can find extra information about having a **tumour** that you might want to know.



Finding out what's wrong



One morning, just as everyone was getting ready for school, Ava told her mum that her tummy was hurting and she felt really unwell. Dad took Oliver to school and Mum stayed with Ava.

Ava began to feel better after a while and managed to get into school at lunchtime, but the next day she woke up feeling poorly again.

Ava and Mum went to see the doctor to see why Ava's tummy kept hurting. The doctor gave her some medicine to try at home. The medicine didn't seem to work, so they went back to the doctor and he gave them a different medicine.

When that didn't work either, he sent Ava and Mum to the hospital to see if the doctors there knew what was wrong.



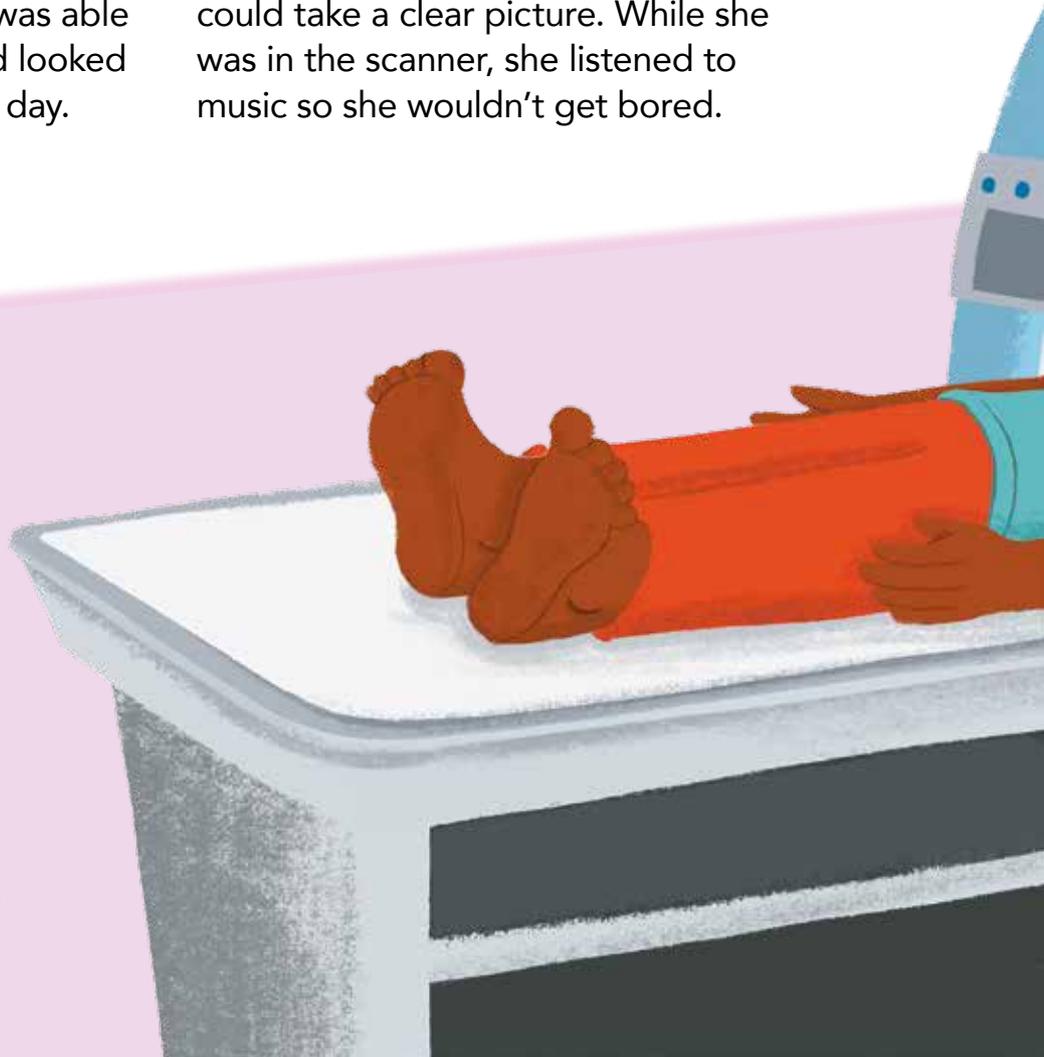
The hospital doctor was called Dr Hassan. She said they needed to find out why Ava was so ill. Ava would have to stay on the children's ward for a few days for tests.

A ward is a friendly place in the hospital where children stay while they are poorly. There were other children on the ward and Ava's mum was able to stay with her while her dad looked after Oliver and visited every day.

Ava had to have some special tests at the hospital. Some were **blood tests*** and one of them was a scan. She had to lie very still for quite a long time while the scanner took pictures of the inside of her body.

It didn't hurt a bit and Ava was very good at keeping still so the scanner could take a clear picture. While she was in the scanner, she listened to music so she wouldn't get bored.

*Words in italics are explained in the 'What these words mean' section at the back of this book.





What's cancer?

After a few days, Dr Hassan saw Ava and her parents. She explained that the pictures showed that Ava had a lump inside her tummy, and this was why her tummy hurt. She said the lump was called a **tumour** and was a type of **cancer**.

"What is **cancer**?" Ava asked.

Dr Hassan explained, "Everyone's body is made up of millions of tiny cells, so tiny you can't see them without a microscope. These cells make different things our bodies need – like blood, muscle or bone.

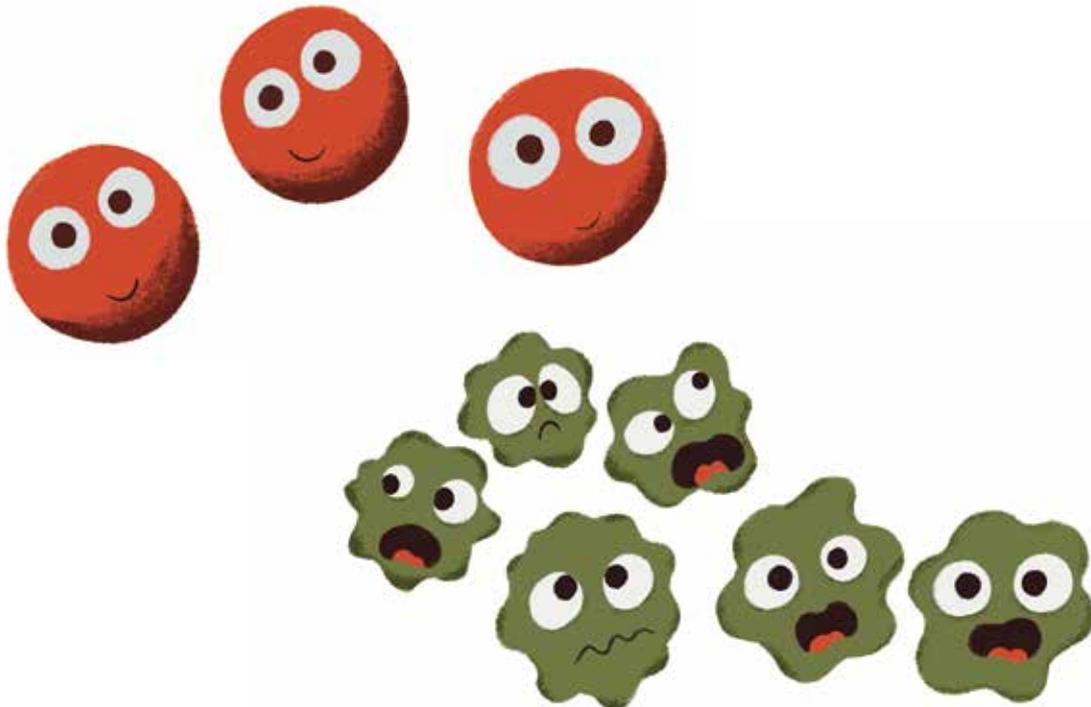


"Sometimes the cells start to divide up to make new cells too quickly and they don't do their job properly. Lots of damaged cells are made and they stop the good cells from working properly.

"This is called **cancer**. When the damaged cells do not know what they should do they begin to stick together to form a lump. This is called a **tumour**. There are lots of different kinds of **cancer**."

"Why did I get it?" Ava asked.

Dr Hassan said that doctors didn't know why some children got **cancer**, but what they did know was that it was nobody's fault. "You haven't done anything to cause **cancer**," she said, "and you can't give it to someone else like a cough or a cold."



Ava's

biopsy

Ava needed to have a small **operation** so the doctors could decide on the best treatment for her **tumour**. The **operation** was called a **biopsy**. It meant taking out a tiny part of the **tumour** so the doctors could look at it under a microscope.

Ava had never had an **operation** before and she was worried it would hurt. Dr Hassan explained that she would have a medicine called an **anaesthetic** which would make her go to sleep for the **operation**. This meant that she wouldn't feel anything. Then she'd wake up when the **operation** was finished.

Did you know?

Some people feel ill when they wake up after having an **anaesthetic**. Some people feel cold and shivery, while others might feel dizzy or sick. This doesn't last long – you'll usually feel better by the next day.





After Ava had her **operation**, she needed to stay in hospital for a few days. Mum stayed with her, and Dad and Oliver came to visit. Oliver liked playing with Ava and the other children on the ward.

The ward had lots of toys and games to play, so there was lots to do even if you didn't feel well enough to get out of bed.

It would take a few days for the doctors to get the results of all the tests, so when Ava was well enough, she went home. Oliver was really pleased that Ava was back home, but she got lots of presents and he felt left out. Mum and Dad soon realised that everyone was making a fuss of Ava and made sure that Oliver was always included.

"After all," Dad said, "Oliver and I have had a hard time too and missed Ava and Mum when they were at the hospital."

Did you know?

Sometimes wards have rules about who can visit and when. If you have questions about visiting, you can ask the nurses on your ward.



Chemotherapy

Soon Ava had to go back to the hospital to see what the tests showed. Mum and Ava saw Dr Hassan again and the nurses who would be looking after her. They also met Abby, their Young Lives vs Cancer **Social Worker**, who was there to talk to Ava and her family about what help they might need.

Dr Hassan explained that Ava would need to have some medicines called **chemotherapy**. She might also need to have another **operation** and possibly some other treatment, called **radiotherapy**, later on.



Some **chemotherapy** would be tablets and some would be medicine that would go straight into Ava's body through a **central line**. There are different types of **central lines**, like a **Broviac**[®], a **portacath** and a **Hickman**[®] line. Often the line is called a wiggly! The treatment would take some months, but she would not be in hospital all the time.

Did you know?

A **central line** is a thin tube that goes into your chest. You'll have a small **operation** to put this in, but it won't hurt because you'll have an **anaesthetic** to make you go to sleep.



Soon it was time for Ava to start her treatment. Now she'd had her wiggly line put in, she could start **chemotherapy**. The medicine went through the line straight into her chest. It didn't hurt but sometimes made her feel a bit funny. When the **chemotherapy** finished the machine beeped!

Ava didn't have to stay in bed while she had **chemotherapy**, so sometimes she went for a walk around the ward.

Sometimes, the **chemotherapy** made Ava feel tired and sick. When that happened, a nurse gave her some medicine to help her stop feeling sick. Ava also found that some food tasted different. This was weird, but Dr Hassan said that **chemotherapy** did that sometimes, and that things would taste normal again soon.







After a while, the **chemotherapy** made Ava's hair fall out. This happened quite slowly and it didn't hurt. Ava was upset because she really liked her hair. One of the nurses told her she'd be surprised by how quickly it grew back after her **chemotherapy** treatment was finished. In the meantime, Ava decided to wear her favourite pink hat.

At the hospital, Ava saw lots of other children who were also having **chemotherapy**. Some of them had wigs, and some wore hats, caps or scarves. Some already had their own hair again. They often talked and played together.



Ava had lots of **chemotherapy** to try to shrink the tumour. It took a long time, but after each course she was able to go home. Sometimes she would get a temperature and not feel well. When this happened, she had to go to hospital for special medicine called antibiotics.

Once she had to have a **blood transfusion** to help her have more energy. The new blood went down the wiggly line so it didn't hurt and it made her feel better.





Ava quite liked being on the ward. The **play specialists** and teachers helped her to do activities and make things when she felt well enough. Ava made friends with a boy called Charlie who had **leukaemia** and a girl called Zarah who had a **tumour** in her brain.

There was a child called Riley who had to stay in their room because they were having a **bone marrow transplant**. Ava and her friends waved to Riley through the window. People who have **bone marrow transplants** have to stay in their rooms until their bone marrow starts to work properly.



Charlie went home before Ava, but his mum and Ava's mum had made friends too, and they were messaging each other about how Ava and Charlie were doing. That's how Ava heard that Charlie's friend at school had chickenpox, so Charlie had to take some medicine to stop him catching it too.

People who are having **chemotherapy** can be very unwell if they catch chickenpox or other bugs. Ava thought it was strange that you could catch chickenpox but you couldn't catch **cancer**.



Ava's

operation



When Ava had finished her **chemotherapy**, Dr Hassan told her that it had made the **tumour** much smaller. Now, she needed an **operation** to take it out.

Ava had an **anaesthetic** and went to sleep for the **operation**, like when she had her **biopsy**. Mum was with her while she fell asleep, and when she woke up, Mum and Dad were both there.

While Ava was getting better Mum, Dad and Grandad came to read her stories and she was given lots of cuddles. The doctors and nurses were very kind and answered any questions they had.

A little while after Ava had her **operation**, she was able to go home for a while. She was beginning to feel better and was able to play with Oliver and Sophie, but she was not well enough to play with the kittens and she really missed that.

Sometimes Ava felt well enough to go to school for a little while and see her friends.



When she was not well enough for school, Mrs Henderson, a teacher from her school, came and gave her lessons at home. Ava really enjoyed that. Dad said the lessons would help her keep up with the work her friends were doing in school. She also had a video call with her class, which was a lot of fun.



Radiotherapy

After her **operation**, Ava had more tests and Dr Hassan said she needed to have **radiotherapy**. She told Ava that she might get very tired and would probably have to miss more school.

Ava didn't mind the **radiotherapy**. It was a bit like being in a spaceship where she had to stay very still. The **radiographer** helped her get on a special bed that moved up and down. Ava had lines drawn on her tummy to show where the rays should go to make her better.

Did you know?

Radiotherapy is another kind of **cancer** treatment. It's done by pointing powerful rays like X-rays at the **tumour** to get rid of any bits that are left after **chemotherapy**. Not everyone with a **tumour** will need to have **radiotherapy**.



What

happens next?

After a while, all Ava's treatment had finished and soon her wiggly line would be taken out. Her hair was growing back and she was starting to feel better. Dr Hassan said she would only need to come to the hospital for check-ups and tests to make sure she was growing properly and keeping well.

Oliver helped Mum and Dad to arrange a surprise party for Ava. All her friends came and although she was not quite well enough to dance as much as them, Ava had a wonderful time. The biggest surprise was a little kitten all of her own...

What do you think she called her?
Wiggly!





What these words mean



You may hear lots of strange new words when you're in hospital. Below we explain what some of them mean. If you're unsure about any others, just ask your doctor or nurse.

Anaesthetic

This is a medicine a doctor gives you that makes you really sleepy, so that you fall asleep. You have an anaesthetic before an operation or bone marrow test, so you can sleep right through it without feeling anything. Afterwards the doctors will wake you up.

Biopsy

When a piece of the tumour is taken out and looked at under a microscope.

Blood test

When a tiny sample of your blood is looked at to see how many red cells, white cells and platelets you have (this is called a full blood count or FBC).

Blood/platelet transfusion

When your blood count is low you may need extra blood to help you feel better.

Bone marrow transplant

When you are given a new set of blood-forming cells which then produce healthy new red and white cells.

Cancer

When the cells in your body become abnormal (bad) and continue to grow on their own, out of control.

Central line/Broviac[®] line/ Hickman[®] line

A long plastic tube inserted into one of the big veins (blood vessels) in your body, usually your neck. The end comes out through a small hole in the skin on your chest. This is inserted under general anaesthetic. Sometimes these are called Broviac[®] or Hickman[®] lines. Some people call them wiggles!

Chemotherapy

A mixture of different medicines that treat cancer.

Community nurse

A community nurse is a nurse that visits you at home. They might come to give you some medicine or do a test, so you don't have to go to hospital.

Leukaemia

A form of cancer where the factory that makes your blood is not working properly.

Operation

Where you have some medicine called anaesthetic to make you go to sleep and then the doctors can have a look at your body without hurting you. An operation is sometimes called surgery.

Play specialist

Play specialists help children in hospital to understand what's happening to them and feel more confident about it. They do this using play and fun activities.

Portacath

A device, or bobble, is inserted under the skin near your armpit under general anaesthetic. A very thin tube (the line) then runs under the skin to the main vein in your neck. If treatment is given or blood is taken, 'magic cream' is put on to the skin covering the bobble beforehand – this makes it go numb so it will not hurt so much when the needle goes in.

Radiographer

The person who gives you your radiotherapy treatment is called a radiographer.



Radiotherapy

Where special rays are pointed at the tumour. The job of the rays is to try to get rid of even the tiniest scrap of tumour that might be left after the operation and chemotherapy.

Social worker

A social worker from Young Lives vs Cancer is someone who can help you and your family with things you might need. This could mean explaining medical things so they're easy to understand, helping your family find somewhere to stay near the hospital, arranging for your family to get help with money, or sorting out things to do with work or school. A social worker might have given you this book!

Tumour

When damaged cells in the body stick together to form a lump. Not all tumours are cancer – tumours that are not cancer are called benign.

We know that the impact of cancer on young lives is more than medical. That's why we exist.

Young Lives vs Cancer is the only charity in the UK with specialist social workers who provide tailored emotional and practical support to children and young people with cancer, and their families.

We remove barriers, solve problems and prioritise wellbeing. We take the time to understand what matters most to them. And we stop at nothing to make sure their voices are heard and their unique needs understood.

We don't receive any Government funding. Our vital work is made possible thanks to the kindness of our supporters. Together, we make sure children and young people with cancer get the right care and support at the right time.

Registered charity number (1107328) and registered in Scotland (SC039857).
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Further support

Talk to us:

- through live chat on our website **younglivesvscancer.org.uk** (10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)
- by calling **0300 303 5220** or emailing **getsupport@younglivesvscancer.org.uk** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Please note that everyone's experience will be different and may not follow the order outlined in this book. Services will differ across the UK. Young Lives vs Cancer does not accept any responsibility for information and services provided by third parties, including those referred to or signposted to in this publication.

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Ava Has a Tumour is a story for children who have a tumour to read with their families.

We hope it will help you understand what a tumour is and the treatment you might need for it. It might also be helpful for your friends to read so they can find out more about what's happening.

YOUNG LIVES
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