

Leukemia and diving

I was diagnosed with leukemia and underwent treatment. I am in remission and was recently cleared by my doctors for exercise without restriction. I feel well and need only scheduled follow-up. I have always wanted to scuba dive but am unsure given my condition and subsequent treatment. Can I dive, and are there any restrictions or precautions I should be aware of?

Answer from DAN experts:

Symptoms associated with leukemia include dizziness, fatigue, fever, weakness, weight loss, anemia, easy bruising and bleeding, shortness of breath and infections. Clearly, these all have the potential to affect one's well-being while diving. You and your doctor should consider two important criteria. First, diving should be considered only for patients who are in remission - as you are. It's important that all divers be free from any distracting or disabling symptoms. Second, it is important that you and your physician confirm that you are not only in good health but also have good exercise tolerance. As you may know, many dive accidents result from challenges posed by the diving environment such as currents, surface swims, and weather and sea conditions. All divers must be prepared to face such challenges before returning to the water.