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Canadian Hockey Legend, Paul Henderson Inspires Millions Through His Battle With Leukemia

# Canadian Hockey Legend, Paul Henderson Inspires Millions Through His Battle With Leukemia

**PATIENT PERSPECTIVE** “Henderson has scored for Canada!” Television broadcaster Foster Hewitt’s call in the final seconds of the 1972 Summit Series still gives millions of hockey fans goosebumps.

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Paul Henderson pictured at his home in Mississauga — fitness a key component of his daily routine.

It was a defining moment in Canadian sport. More than four decades after Paul Henderson scored the historic, series-winning goal in Moscow, he remains an inspirational figure, and not just because of his heroics on the ice. Almost six years after being diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, Henderson is thriving — and his story is emboldening other Canadians who are also battling cancer.

Early on, Henderson ruled out chemotherapy as a form of treatment and chose to battle the illness through diet and exercise. He took various supplements and vitamins and followed a strict exercise regimen, but his health continued to decline. Within three years, he had dropped almost 30 lbs and 83 percent of his bone marrow was malignant.

### Targeted solutions

In 2012, he headed to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., to take part in a clinical trial of a drug designed to interfere with the growth and spread of cancer cells without affecting other cells. His progress has been remarkable. He is back to a healthy weight and his most recent test indicates that only 5-10 percent of his bone marrow is malignant. Henderson still has cancer — the only possible cure is a bone marrow transplant — but the drug is keeping it in check.

The drug was approved for use in Canada in December. In an interview with Canada.com that month, Dr. Ronan Foley, Henderson's physician and a hematologist at Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton, Ont., expressed enthusiasm about "a new era in cancer therapy."

"I advise people with serious illnesses to work with specialists. If you have a cancer, don't consult with just any oncologist," he says, "Choose one who specializes in the kind of cancer

### The team surrounding you

Henderson places a lot of faith in the healthcare providers he has worked with. "When you have a serious illness, it's important to have a great team around you," Henderson says. "It's important to trust and believe in all of them." Henderson, who spent 13 years in the NHL, says he's the "quarterback" of his team, but he is quick to add that he

you have.”

leans heavily on the experts.

“I advise people with serious illnesses to work with specialists. If you have a cancer, don’t consult with just any oncologist,” he says, “Choose one who specializes in the kind of cancer you have.”

Henderson, 72, also attributes his renewed health to those closest to him. “I have a great family around me,” says Henderson, who has three daughters and seven grandchildren. “I’ve been married to the same woman, Eleanor, for 52 years and I couldn’t have chosen a better partner.”

### Veteran perspective on life

Henderson, a native of Lucknow, Ont., believes a patient’s mental outlook is just as important as the medical care he or she receives. “There is nothing to be gained from worrying about your disease or your future,” he says. “I don’t waste time with that.”

Henderson has been a devout Christian since 1975, and he believes in the power of prayer. “When I get anxious, I ask the Lord for help. When you have hope and peace, you can handle anything,” he says.

Henderson continues to lead an active life. He plays golf, works out and delights in watching his grandchildren playing the game that made him a household name. Henderson also appears at events as a motivational speaker, and he and Eleanor often speak at marriage conferences.

“I refuse to let cancer define me or my life,” he says. “I can’t think of anyone who has had a better life than me. No one is more fortunate than I am – even with the cancer.”

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