

Nutritional Considerations When A Child Is Receiving Radiation

- The radiation field, number of treatments, and dosage to be administered will all impact the child's ability to feed or adequately meet his/her nutritional needs. The radiation oncologist will be able to provide information regarding potential side effects of treatment.
- The impact of radiation is cumulative and can carry over for weeks/months post radiation. The impact on the child's ability to eat/drink may not be evident until after several treatments or several weeks.
- For very small children or children who may be easily agitated, sedation may be required for each treatment. No food or drink may be allowed for several hours prior to each radiation treatment. This may limit the available hours for the child to eat/drink. Close attention to oral intake, hydration status, and weight is needed.
- If chemotherapy is planned at the same time as radiation, the potential side effects of the drugs need to be considered and included in the overall nutritional plan.
- Fatigue is common with radiation. The child may need to sleep more as treatment continues. If a child is sleeping more, there may be less hours available to meet nutritional needs. Close attention to oral intake and hydration is needed.
- Close monitoring of weight and early nutritional intervention is important. If the child's weight is falling each week, do not wait until the child has lost 10% or more of their body weight.