

What to Expect When Your Child has Anesthesia with Radiation Treatment

This factsheet provides you with information about what to expect when your child receives anesthesia with their radiation treatment. Anesthesia helps a patient sleep and not feel pain during treatment. Radiation treatment isn't painful, but it is important that your child not move during the treatment. We always give anesthesia during radiation treatment to younger children or children who have difficulty holding still for an extended period of time.

Getting Ready for the Appointment

Your child should have nothing to eat or drink before the appointment. Typically, this starts at midnight the night before the appointment. If your child feeds through a bottle or is breastfed, uses a feeding tube, or takes certain medications, we will provide more specific instructions. Any food or liquid poses a choking risk when under anesthesia. We cannot provide treatment when your child has had anything outside of our instructions.

Plan to bring items to care for your child including diapers, toys and entertainment, and snacks for after the treatment.

You should dress your child so they are comfortable during their treatment. Here are some tips on what your child should and should not wear:

- Wear sweatpants, pajama bottoms, or other comfortable, loose clothing. Wear slippers or easily removed shoes.
- Do not wear any metal—jewelry, eyeglasses, or metal on their clothing such as buttons or zippers.
- Sometimes, we will need your child to change into a gown for treatment. We will provide the gown for your child each day when you arrive.
- The treatment rooms can be cold so plan on bringing a lightweight zipper hoodie or jacket for afterward.

If Your Child has a Port

Our nursing staff will access your child's port each Monday and then de-access it on Friday. Plan to arrive 20 minutes early on Mondays for this procedure. Remember to use the Emla® numbing cream 30 minutes before the appointment. We do not have pain relief spray (freeze-e spray).

Arriving for the Appointment

Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early.

During the Appointment

After checking in at the desk, we will direct you and your child to the clinic area. In an exam room, we check on your child and answer your questions. If your child has a port, the nurse will access it.

We will then call the anesthesia doctor to meet with you. The anesthesiologist will meet with you and your child briefly before each radiation treatment. We try to have you meet with the same doctors every day, but it may not always be possible.

During the Treatment

We will escort you and your child from the exam room into the treatment area. The anesthesia doctor will provide medicine to help your child relax and fall asleep.

Most of the time, you can stay with your child until they fall asleep. We will then ask you to move into the recovery area. Because our team needs to work efficiently, they may ask you to leave at any time. Parents and family may not watch while radiation is in progress. This is hospital policy and is for your safety.

The radiation therapist will then work with your child to make sure we give the treatment correctly. A radiation therapist works with the radiation doctor and nurses to give the correct and exact treatment.

Radiation is invisible, and it causes no pain during the treatment. When the radiation machine is on, only the person being treated can be in the room. The radiation team and anesthesia doctors can see and hear your child with a video camera and an intercom system during the sessions. They monitor your child for the duration of the treatment, which usually lasts about 20-30 minutes.

After the Treatment

As soon as your child completes their treatment, we will move them to the recovery area. In the recovery area, our doctors and nurses will care for your child to make sure they fully recover from the medicine. We encourage you to be with your child at this point and plan to stay for at least 30 minutes. If you have a drink or snack for your child, check with the clinic team to make sure it is okay.

The clinic team will let you know when your child has recovered enough to go home. If your child is staying at Primary Children's Hospital, we will call a transport van and your inpatient nurse to take you and your child back to their room.

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact your child's nurse at 801-581-2396.

We take great care to ensure you and your child's experience is as enjoyable as a hospital visit can be. If you can think of anything that we can do to make your visits better, we would love your feedback.