

Service information

Speech Pathology and Oncology

Why do I need to see a speech pathologist?

Speech pathologists are trained in the assessment and management of communication and swallowing disorders. Children who undergo oncology treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery can experience changes in their feeding, swallowing and communication skills. Children can often require long stays in hospital which may increase your child's risk of developing communication and/or swallowing difficulties.

During oncology treatment, your child may experience the following difficulties:

- difficulty swallowing and changes in their swallow safety due to the location or size of the cancer
- inflammation/pain in the mouth and throat caused by treatment
- pain when swallowing
- dry mouth or thick saliva due to changes in your saliva production
- reduced jaw opening (trismus)
- loss or change to taste
- voice changes
- difficulty communicating after surgery or while on treatment.

How can a speech pathologist help your child?

A speech pathologist can help your child with:

- Feeding and swallowing difficulties – supporting infants and children with difficulties eating, drinking and swallowing safely.
- Speech delays and disorders – articulation and producing speech sounds.
- Expressive language difficulties – using language to share thoughts, feelings and ideas.
- Receptive language difficulties – understanding language, word meanings and instructions.
- Social communication difficulties – assisting with communicating for social purposes and following the rules for conversation (e.g. turn taking, eye contact).
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) – supporting children with difficulties speaking verbally or writing, e.g. using pictures, communication boards or assistive devices to support your child's understanding and use of language.
- Difficulties with quality of their voice – including pitch, quality and loudness.
- Cognitive-communication disorders – organising thoughts, planning, reasoning, paying attention, remembering and problem solving.
- Pre-literacy and literacy skills – assistance learning to read, write and spell on the background of communication difficulties.
- Hearing rehabilitation for children who have experienced hearing loss as part of their treatment.

When will my child see the speech pathologist?

If you have concerns with your child's communication or feeding/swallowing let your oncology team know so they can make a referral. The speech pathologist may see you either before, during or after your treatment. During these sessions, a speech pathologist will work with you and your child to develop a personalised assessment and management program to address your family's goals.

Your speech pathologist is:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Hours: _____

Contact us

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