



The Impact of Cancer on Child Obesity: Understanding the Relationship and Managing Risks

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity is a serious public health issue that has been on the rise in recent decades. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 38.2 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese in 2019, and the number is expected to increase in the coming years. While there are many factors that contribute to childhood obesity, including genetics, diet, and physical activity, cancer and its treatment can also have a significant impact on a child's weight and body composition. Cancer treatment can lead to unintended weight loss, which can result in malnutrition and further health complications. However, some children may also experience weight gain or obesity as a result of cancer treatment. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and other cancer treatments can cause changes in appetite, metabolism, and hormone levels that can lead to weight gain. In addition, children who undergo treatment for certain types of cancer, such as leukaemia, may require prolonged periods of inactivity, which can also contribute to weight gain.

DESCRIPTION

Weight gain during cancer treatment can be particularly challenging for children who were already overweight or obese before their cancer diagnosis. According to a study published in the journal *Paediatric Blood and Cancer*, children with pre-existing obesity who underwent treatment for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) had a significantly higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome, a group of conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Moreover, childhood obesity itself is a known risk factor for certain types of cancer, including leukaemia, brain tumours, and

kidney cancer. In addition, children who are overweight or obese may also experience social and emotional challenges, such as low self-esteem, bullying, and depression.

Given the potential impact of cancer treatment on a child's weight and the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity, it is important for healthcare providers to monitor a child's weight and body composition before, during, and after cancer treatment. This can help to identify changes in weight and body composition early on and provide appropriate interventions to manage these changes.

There are several strategies that healthcare providers can use to manage weight changes in children undergoing cancer treatment. One approach is to provide nutrition counselling and support to ensure that children are getting the nutrients they need to support their growth and development. This may include encouraging children to eat a healthy, balanced diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources.

Another strategy is to encourage regular physical activity, which can help children maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of obesity-related health problems. Healthcare providers may recommend age-appropriate activities, such as walking, swimming, or bike riding, and work with families to develop a plan that fits their child's needs and preferences.

In addition to these strategies, healthcare providers can also address any underlying psychological or emotional factors that may contribute to weight gain or weight loss during cancer treatment. For example, children who are experiencing anxiety or depression may be less likely to engage in physical activity or eat a healthy diet, and addressing these issues may help to promote better weight management.

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It is also important for families to be involved in the management of their child's weight and body composition during cancer treatment. Parents and caregivers can help by providing healthy meals and snacks, encouraging physical activity, and working with healthcare providers to develop a plan that meets their child's needs.

While cancer treatment can have a significant impact on a child's weight and body composition, it is important to remember that the priority is always to treat the cancer and improve the child's overall health and well-being. However, by working together to manage changes in weight and body composition, healthcare providers and families can help to minimize the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cancer and its treatment can have a significant impact on a child's weight and body composition, which can in turn increase the risk of childhood obesity and related health problems. Healthcare providers, families, and caregivers can work together to monitor and manage changes in weight and body composition during cancer treatment by providing nutrition counselling, encouraging physical activity, and addressing underlying psychological or emotional factors. By doing so, they can help to minimize the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity and ensure that children receive the best possible care and support during and after cancer treatment.