

RADIATION THERAPY AS PART OF YOUR CANCER TREATMENT

About half of people treated for cancer will receive radiation therapy at some point during treatment. Focused radiation is used either alone or in combination with other treatments such as chemotherapy and surgery. Radiation therapy is the use of high-energy x-rays to target specific areas of cancer and destroy the cancer cells. It works by damaging each cancer cell's ability to reproduce.

The Halcyon system delivers precise image-guided, volumetric, radiation therapy up to four times faster than standard technology. Images can be acquired in less than 15 seconds and treatment can be administered in about two minutes. This type of cancer treatment shapes the radiation beams to match the shape of the tumor. Advances in imaging technology have made it possible to locate and treat the tumor more precisely. This exact targeting makes it possible to use higher levels of radiation making treatment more effective in shrinking and killing tumors.

MEET THE TREATMENT TEAM

Your cancer care will be handled by a team of experienced oncology specialists dedicated to providing you and your family with the highest quality of care.

- ***Radiation Oncologist:*** physician responsible for developing an individualized plan for how the radiation will be delivered and what doses of radiation are necessary to achieve successful treatment. The physician will monitor you closely to ensure treatment is delivered precisely
- ***Radiation Oncology Nurse:*** team member who works closely with you to answer any questions you may have before, during and after treatment, and to assist with management of any side effects
- ***Radiation Therapists:*** team members who will help to position you and deliver your prescribed daily radiation treatments
- ***Dosimetrists:*** team members who take the prescription written by the radiation oncologist and creates the best treatment plan to ensure the tumor receives enough radiation while sparing the adjacent, normal tissue
- ***Medical Physicists:*** team members who work closely with the radiation oncologist during treatment planning and delivery. They make certain the complex treatments are properly customized to each patient. They are also responsible for the calibrations and quality assurance of the radiation treatment machine

WILL MY INSURANCE COVER RADIATION TREATMENT?

We are committed to helping you and your family have full access to all cancer services. Most insurance plans are accepted. Our team of front office experts will retrieve authorization for your treatment plan prior to the start of your treatment. If you have any questions regarding your insurance carrier, please contact our patient insurance specialist.

WHAT TO EXPECT BEFORE TREATMENT: CT SIMULATION

During your first visit, your radiation oncologist will evaluate your medical history and conduct a physical examination to assess your clinical condition as well as the extent of disease. During this consultative visit, you will discuss the benefits of, and possible risks associated with radiation therapy and if you are an appropriate candidate for treatment.

Once it is determined that radiation will be used as part or all of your cancer treatment, it is necessary to carefully plan your therapy. This process is called CT simulation. This planning session is about 30 minutes to an hour in length. You may hear your team call it a “sim” or “CT sim” Here are the details:

- Utilizing a CT scanner to determine where the cancer is for precise therapy planning. In some cases, your radiation oncologist may also order a PET/CT and/or MRI
- Your therapists measure and mark the areas receiving radiation
- Your therapists place you in the exact position in which you will be receiving your radiation treatment
- Your therapists will create devices and molds to securely hold you in the necessary treatment position. This is painless.
- Your therapists will mark your body with implanted markers or tattoos to best target the tumor
- Take special care not to remove the ink marks on the skin

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING TREATMENT: SIDE EFFECTS

With our advanced technology, side effects are fewer than in years past because of the very precise way the radiation is delivered. Typically, side effects may vary depending on the specific area where the radiation is being delivered. Our team will include a list of potential side effects specific to your treatment location in your patient packet. Side effects usually peak within the second to third week of treatment and can last for a while after treatment is finished. We will take every effort to manage side effects in a timely manner with supportive medications, topicals and diet recommendations. It is important to share any side effects with your treatment team right away. Many patients can function normally while undergoing treatment, however it is very important to get plenty of rest and relaxation. Asking for help is important on your journey to survivorship. Generalized side effects may include:

- Fatigue and tiredness
- Skin irritation
- Loss of appetite

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I AM FINISHED WITH MY THERAPY?

After treatment, you will return for routine visits with your radiation oncologist to evaluate for side effects and to ensure that you are healing properly. On your last treatment day, the team will give you a follow-up appointment to see your radiation oncologist. You may have additional testing and imaging down the road to make sure treatment was successful and to monitor you for recurrence.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR RADIATION ONCOLOGIST IMMEDIATELY

912.764.3037

- Fever 100.5 F. degrees or greater
- Uncontrollable nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Pain is not well controlled
- Chest pains or shortness of breath
- Severe shaking or chills
- Bleeding from any location including skin, nose, gums, and genital areas
- Blood in the urine or stool
- Black, tarry bowel movement
- Constipation with intense abdominal cramping
- Changes in your vision or hearing