

Radiation Therapy Treatments

To treat your cancer, your doctor has recommended radiation therapy. It is normal to have questions and concerns about this treatment. Understanding what radiation involves and knowing what to expect during your visits can make the process easier for you.

What is radiation therapy?

Radiation Therapy uses high energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells. It can be used alone or with other treatments like chemotherapy or surgery.

Radiation can be given to:

- Cure cancer
- Control the growth of cancer
- Relieve symptoms, such as pain
- Reduce the risk of cancer coming back
- Some benign conditions



External Beam Radiation Therapy (outside the body)

- One or more beams of radiation are aimed at the area where your cancer is or was removed.
- The radiation comes from a machine that moves around you but doesn't touch you.
- The radiation is "on" for a short time, from a few seconds to a couple of minutes.
- You will be in the treatment room for 15 to 45 minutes, though some treatments may take longer.
- Most patients will have a "simulation" appointment before starting treatment.
 - This appointment takes 20-60 minutes or longer.
 - You will be placed in the treatment position, and aids may be used to help keep you still for simulation and treatment. Images of the treatment area are taken using a CT scanner.
 - Felt pen markings or small permanent tattoos are placed on your skin or immobilization aid. These marks help radiation therapists accurately position you for treatment.

Internal Radiation Therapy (inside the body)

- Also called Brachytherapy.
- Applicator(s) are inserted into the area affected by cancer.
- A radiation source is placed inside the applicator(s), and a scan or X-ray may be taken of the area to be treated.
- Appointment times can vary from about 30 minutes to 5 hours, depending on the specific procedure.

Side Effects of Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy can cause side effects, but they usually only affect the area being treated. Everyone experiences side effects differently. Eating well and getting proper rest can help manage them.

When you start radiation therapy, a radiation therapist will explain how to care for the treatment area and manage any side effects. It is important to tell your therapists, nurse, and doctor about all side effects you experience.

Radiation Therapy Facts

- Radiation Therapy is available at CancerCare Manitoba in Winnipeg and the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre in Brandon.
- Some patients may only receive one treatment, while others may need as many as 25 or more. Your doctor will decide.
- The treated area needs to be exposed so the radiation therapists can see the marks or tattoos that help position you correctly each day. Efforts will be made to keep you comfortable and maintain your privacy.
- During radiation treatment, you will be alone in the treatment room, but the radiation therapists can see and hear you at all times. You are safe.
- Most patients can breathe normally during simulation and treatment. Some may receive specific instructions from the radiation therapist.
- You cannot feel or see radiation.
- Radiation Therapy contact numbers:
Winnipeg 204-787-2252 and Brandon 204-578-2222.