

## Radiation

In order to treat your cancer your doctor has decided you need radiation. It is normal to have questions and concerns about your treatment. Learning what radiation therapy is and what to expect during your visits can help you get through your treatments.



### What is radiation therapy?

Radiation, also called radiotherapy, uses high energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells. It can be used as the only form of treatment or combined with other treatments, for example with chemotherapy or surgery.

Radiation can be given to:

- cure cancer
- control the growth of cancer
- relieve symptoms, such as pain
- reduce the risk of the cancer returning

### Radiation Treatment

#### External Beam Radiation Therapy (outside the body)

- One or more beams of radiation are directed at the area on your body where your cancer is or was removed from.
- The radiation beam comes from a treatment machine which moves around you, but does not touch you.
- The radiation beam is “on” for a short time, a few seconds to a couple of minutes at a time.
- Each appointment is about 15 minutes.
- Most patients receiving external radiation therapy will have a “simulation” appointment.
  - ~ This planning appointment takes 20-60 minutes.
  - ~ You are placed in the treatment position and scans or X-rays are taken of the area to be treated.
  - ~ Felt pen markings or small permanent tattoos are placed on your skin to outline the treatment area. These marks are necessary for the radiation therapists to accurately position you for treatment.

#### Internal Radiation Therapy (inside the body)

- Also called Brachytherapy.
- A tube is inserted into the area of the body affected by cancer.
- A radiation source is placed inside the tube and stays in place for 10-20 minutes.
- Appointment times are usually two to three hours long.
- Only some patients receive internal radiation therapy.

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### Side Effects of Radiation Therapy

Except for feeling tired, side effects occur only in the area of your body that is being treated with radiation. Everyone can experience side effects differently. Eating well and getting proper rest is important to help you manage them.

Possible short term side effects:

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| -headaches                | -hair loss             |
| -skin irritation          | -feeling tired         |
| -sore mouth and/or throat | -difficulty swallowing |
| -loss of appetite         | -nausea                |
| -vomiting                 | -swelling              |
| -productive cough         | -diarrhea              |
| -bladder irritation       |                        |

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

### Radiation Therapy Facts

- All radiation treatments are given between Monday and Friday at CancerCare Manitoba, 675 McDermot Avenue in Winnipeg.
- Some patients may only receive one treatment; others receive as many as 35 or more treatments. This will be decided by your doctor.
- Sometimes a shell or cast may be needed for your treatment. This will be placed over the part of your body that is receiving radiation. It will help you to stay in position during your treatment.
- Radiation therapists can be male or female. All are trained professionals who care about your well being.
- It is necessary to expose the area where you will be treated so that the therapists can see the marks or tattoos that help them place you in the treatment position each day. Every effort will be made to keep you comfortable and maintain your privacy.
- During the radiation treatment you are alone in the treatment room. The therapists can see and hear you. You are safe.
- You can breathe normally when you are being treated.
- You can not feel or see radiation.
- Radiation Therapy contact phone number: 787-2585 or toll free at 1-866-561-1026.