BEFORE TREATMENT

Consultation with the Radiation Oncologist
During your first visit with the radiation oncologist, the doctor will evaluate your need for radiation therapy and its likely results. This includes looking over your current medical issues, past medical and surgical history, medications and lifestyle. After performing a physical examination and reviewing your medical tests, which may include computerized tomography (CT) scans, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans, your radiation oncologist will go over with you the possible benefits and risks of radiation therapy and answer your questions.

Simulation
To be most helpful, radiation therapy must be aimed precisely at the same target(s) each time treatment is given. Simulation is when we perform a CT scan and make custom devices to help reposition you daily for your treatments. We also take measurements, set-up and mark your skin to point the beams at the right spot. The simulation therapist will call you to make an appointment. The simulation appointment will take about one hour after the orders are placed by your physician.

During this visit any of the following may occur:
• Your radiation oncologist and radiation therapist will place you on the simulation CT scanner in the way you will be positioned for your treatments. A custom mold or mask may be made to help you hold that position. The type of device used depends on what area of the body will be treated. A facemask that you can see and breathe through is common if you are being treated in the head or neck area. A custom mold might be made for treating other parts of your body.
• During the CT scan, you will not feel anything during this process. It is very important that you do not move while the therapist is setting the treatment fields.
• Your radiation therapist, under your doctor’s recommendation, will draw marks on your body or place permanent tattoos, so that you can be set up the same way every day.
• Please do not wash off these marks.
• To identify you and your treatment area, photographs will be taken of the treatment area, the marks that were drawn, and your face. These photos will be placed in your chart.
Treatment Planning
Your radiation oncologist along with your dosimetrist (a person who plans and calculates the proper radiation dose for your treatment) or physicist, will review the information they receive from the CT simulation along with your previous medical tests to create a treatment plan. Your radiation oncologist and the dosimetrist will use computer software to create a custom treatment plan that can only be used for you. This process generally takes three to four days, but can take up to two weeks. The treatment plan is created from the radiation therapy prescription that your radiation oncologist writes specifically for you.

TREATMENT ADMINISTRATION

External Beam Radiation Therapy Treatment
External beam radiation is pointed at your cancer from a radiation treatment machine located outside of your body. Treatments are scheduled Monday through Friday, excluding weekends and holidays. Your first treatment lasts about 30 minutes. You will schedule your regular treatment appointment at the end of your first treatment. This will be your daily treatment time. Some patients receive radiation therapy where treatments are given more than once a day. The number of radiation therapy treatments you will receive depends on the size, location and type of cancer, your general health, and other medical treatments you may be receiving.

The radiation therapist will administer your external beam treatment following your radiation oncologist’s instructions. It will take about five minutes for you to be positioned for treatment. If a mask or mold was made during the simulation process, it will be used during every treatment to make sure that you are in the exact same position every day.
Once you are positioned correctly, the therapist will leave the room and go into an attached control room to closely monitor you on a television screen while delivering the radiation treatment. You can talk with the therapist by microphone if you have any worries. The treatment can be stopped at any time if you are feeling sick or uncomfortable. The treatment machine and table may move to point the radiation beam to your cancer.

Most patients are treated on an outpatient basis, and many can continue with normal daily activities. Daily treatments appointments are for approximately 15 to 20 minutes and are scheduled for the same time throughout your course of treatment.

**Brachytherapy Treatments**

**Brachytherapy** is the placement of radioactive sources into or next to a tumor. The radioactive sources may be left in place permanently or temporarily depending on your cancer. To position the sources accurately, special catheters or applicators are used.

There are two main types of brachytherapy: intracavity treatment and interstitial treatment. With intracavity treatment, the radioactive sources are put into an area near the tumor location, such as the cervix, vagina, breast or windpipe. With interstitial treatment, the radioactive sources are put directly into the tissues, such as the prostate.

**On Treatment Visits**

During radiation therapy, your radiation oncologist and nurse will see you weekly or more often if needed to follow your progress, to see whether you are having any side effects, recommend treatments for those side effects (such as medication) and address any concerns you may have. Your radiation therapy team will meet often to review your case to make sure your treatment is going as planned and to discuss any concerns.

**Side Effects**

The side effects of radiation therapy are usually related to the area that is being treated. For example, a breast cancer patient may feel skin irritation, such as a mild to moderate sunburn, while a patient with throat cancer may have soreness when swallowing. These side effects are usually temporary and can be managed by your radiation oncology treatment team.

Side effects usually begin by the second or third week of treatment, and they may last for a few weeks after the last radiation treatments are complete. Be sure to talk to a member of your radiation therapy team about any problems you are having.
To care for yourself during radiation therapy, we recommend:

**Get plenty of rest.** The side effect most often reported by patients is fatigue.

**Eat a balanced, nutritious diet.** Your radiation oncologist or nurse may recommend that you meet with a registered dietitian to talk about dietary issues that could affect your treatment.

**Treat the skin that is exposed to radiation with extra care.** Wash the skin gently daily with warm water and a mild soap. Avoid using any lotions, perfumes, deodorants or powders on the treatment area. Avoid putting ice packs and heat packs on the treated skin.

**Seek emotional support.** There are many emotional demands that you may be coping with during your cancer treatment. It is common to feel anxious, afraid or depressed. It may help to talk about your feelings with a family member, close friend, nurse or counselor. To find a support group or counselor, ask a member of your care team.

**Support Services**

The **Cancer Resource Guide**, available from the receptionist or at the nursing station, contains valuable information about financial, lodging and transportation resources that may be of help to you. Ask the cancer concierge or your care team for specific details about these programs.
AFTER TREATMENT

Follow-up
After treatment is over, follow-up appointments will be scheduled so that your radiation oncologist can make sure your recovery is going well while continuing to monitor your health. Your radiation oncologist may order additional diagnostic tests. Reports on your treatment can be sent to your other doctors. Eventually the frequency of your visits will decrease. However, you should know that your radiation oncology team will always be available should you need to speak to someone about your treatment.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Radiation Therapy Phone Number .................................................775-982-4000

Doctor’s Name .................................................................

Nurse’s Name .................................................................

Simulation Date and Time .............................................

Treatment Start Date and Time .....................................

Daily Treatment Time ...................................................

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