

WHAT TO EXPECT PALLIATIVE RADIATION TREATMENT

BEFORE TREATMENT

1. You will meet with your hospice doctor to discuss your goals. The doctor will ask about your hopes when it comes to your physical comfort and mental, spiritual, and emotional needs
2. You will meet with the radiation oncologist (the doctor who gives the radiation therapy) in person or by videoconference. The doctor will look over your records, including whether you have had radiation before, and what scans and other treatment you have had.
3. You will not need extra scans, labs, or testing for radiation treatment. You and your family should ask your doctors any questions you may have about getting radiation.
4. The doctor will explain the possible benefits and risks of treatment. If radiation is right for you, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form.
5. Your hospice doctor may give you medicine to treat or prevent pain, anxiety, or nausea before treatment.

SAME-DAY SIMULATION AND TREATMENT

1. You will go to the radiation oncology office with your family or friends. Medical transportation can also be used if needed.
2. When you arrive, you will check in and be given directions on where to go. You should plan to be in the radiation oncology office for at least 4 to 6 hours.
3. You will first have a planning session, called a “simulation” (or “sim” for short) in a scanning machine. The planning session takes about one hour. The team will draw marks and/or put stickers on your skin to help them aim the radiation beam at the tumor. The team may also use extra supports to help you stay in the same position during treatment.
4. After the simulation, you will go back to the waiting area while the team makes a treatment plan that is just for you. This may take a few hours.
5. If your treatment is going to be the same day as the simulation, you will stay in the radiation oncology practice until the plan is completed. If you prefer to have your treatment on another day, you will be called back to the office when your plan is ready.
6. The treatment will last about 15 to 30 minutes. The radiation itself is quick and painless.
7. After treatment, the radiation oncologist will talk to you about next steps and what to expect. You will be given a summary and you will be able to go home or back to the hospice facility.

AFTER TREATMENT

Radiation may affect healthy tissue around the tumor and some side effects may take a few days after your treatment to show up. The hospice doctor or nurse will check on you and watch for side effects.

Here are some things that people feel after getting radiation:

- Fatigue
- Sensitive skin (rare)
- Nausea (if you get radiation to your upper abdomen)

Here are some things that you can do to take care of yourself after getting radiation:

- Rest
- Talk to your friends and family for support
- Focus on hobbies or activities that help that you enjoy
- Use any lotions that your doctor agrees with
- Contact your hospice doctor if any side effects worsen