

Radiotherapy

Head & Neck Treatment



Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District

Illawarra & Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centres

The Illawarra and Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centres acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

In this booklet

| | |
|---|----|
| General information | 2 |
| Support services..... | 3 |
| Your radiotherapy care team | 4 |
| Radiotherapy consultation | |
| Your pathway | 7 |
| What is radiotherapy | 9 |
| Treatment side effects | 11 |
| Radiotherapy planning | |
| Preparing for your planning appointment | 15 |
| Radiotherapy planning appointment | 17 |
| Radiotherapy planning | 24 |
| Radiotherapy treatment | |
| Radiotherapy treatment | 25 |
| Managing side effects | |
| Managing side effects | 29 |
| General skin care..... | 32 |
| After radiotherapy | |
| After radiotherapy | 35 |
| Frequently asked questions | |
| Frequently asked questions | 39 |
| Resources..... | 41 |

General information



This booklet will help you with your journey through radiation treatment. The information is general and may not always apply to you. Please talk with your treating team if you have any questions.



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Illawarra
Cancer Care
Ph: 4222 5200

Shoalhaven
Cancer Care
Ph: 4428 7400

During your treatment contact your radiation oncologist or clinical nurse consultant if you have:

- Severe pain in the treatment area
- A temperature of 38 degrees or higher
- Nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty tolerating fluids.

Out of hours go to your nearest emergency department if you have:

- Difficulty breathing or
- Increased bleeding from the neck or throat.

Need an interpreter?

Professional interpreters are available if you need help to communicate in English, or if you are Deaf.

Our staff can also ask for an interpreter. The staff will book an interpreter for you.

Interpreter Services are free and confidential.

You can bring a family member or friend with you to the appointment. If you need help to communicate it should be through a professional interpreter.

You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **1800 24 72 72** if you need to speak to us before an appointment.

Support services



There are a number of services available to help support both you and your family. Please ask staff for more information or a referral.

- ☐ **Counselling support for patients and carers affected by cancer**
 - Access to social worker and/or psychologist.
- ☐ **Local community support for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people**
 - Support services and criteria vary across the local communities. Some services are Grand Pacific Health, Aboriginal Medical Services, and Waminda.
- ☐ **Legal and financial assistance**
 - Cancer Council - 13 11 20 www.cancercouncil.com.au
 - **Can Assist** - www.canassist.org.au
 - Centrelink - apply online for payments such as JobSeeker, Disability Support Pension, Carer Payment or Carer Allowance.
 - Advance Care Directive - www.health.nsw.gov.au/patients/acp/Pages/acd-form-info-book.aspx
- ☐ **Practical help in the home**
 - My Aged Care 1800 200 422
 - Carer Gateway 1800 422 737
- ☐ **Transport / Travel**
 - There is community transport for those that have difficulty, at a small fee.
 - Travel & accommodation subsidy (IPTAAS). If travelling more than 200km per week: www.iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au
- ☐ **Accommodation**
 - For those who have difficulty getting to the cancer centre, we have on-site accommodation available at both centres.
- ☐ **Support for children**
 - Camp Quality - support for children 0-15 years www.campquality.org.au
 - CANTEEN - support for young people 12-24 years www.canteen.org.au

Each cancer centre may have extra information for you.

Your radiotherapy care team



Radiation oncologist

Contact: _____

What they do:

A doctor who prescribes radiotherapy and organises your treatment.

Radiation oncology registrar

Contact: _____

What they do:

A doctor who is training to be an oncologist. They are always supervised by your radiation oncologist.

Clinical nurse consultant

Contact: _____

What they do:

A nurse with specialised knowledge of head and neck cancer who will help coordinate your care, provide information, referrals and support.

Radiation therapist

Contact: _____

What they do:

Specially trained to plan and deliver your treatment. They will also help support you through treatment.

Radiotherapy nurse

Contact: _____

What they do:

Specialise in caring for people having radiation therapy. They manage your side effects, and will help support you through treatment.

Radiation oncology medical physicist

Contact: _____

What they do:

Ensures that your treatment is delivered accurately and safely. You may see them at your planning appointment.

Psychologist

Contact: _____

What they do:

A specialist who provides psychological assessment and interventions for cancer patients, and where required, to families and carers.

Social worker

Contact: _____

What they do:

Provides counselling, support and information for you and your family. They can help with important conversations about your cancer diagnosis and its impact.

Speech Pathologist

Contact: _____

What they do:

Give you advice and management of speech, voice and swallowing problems.

Dietitian

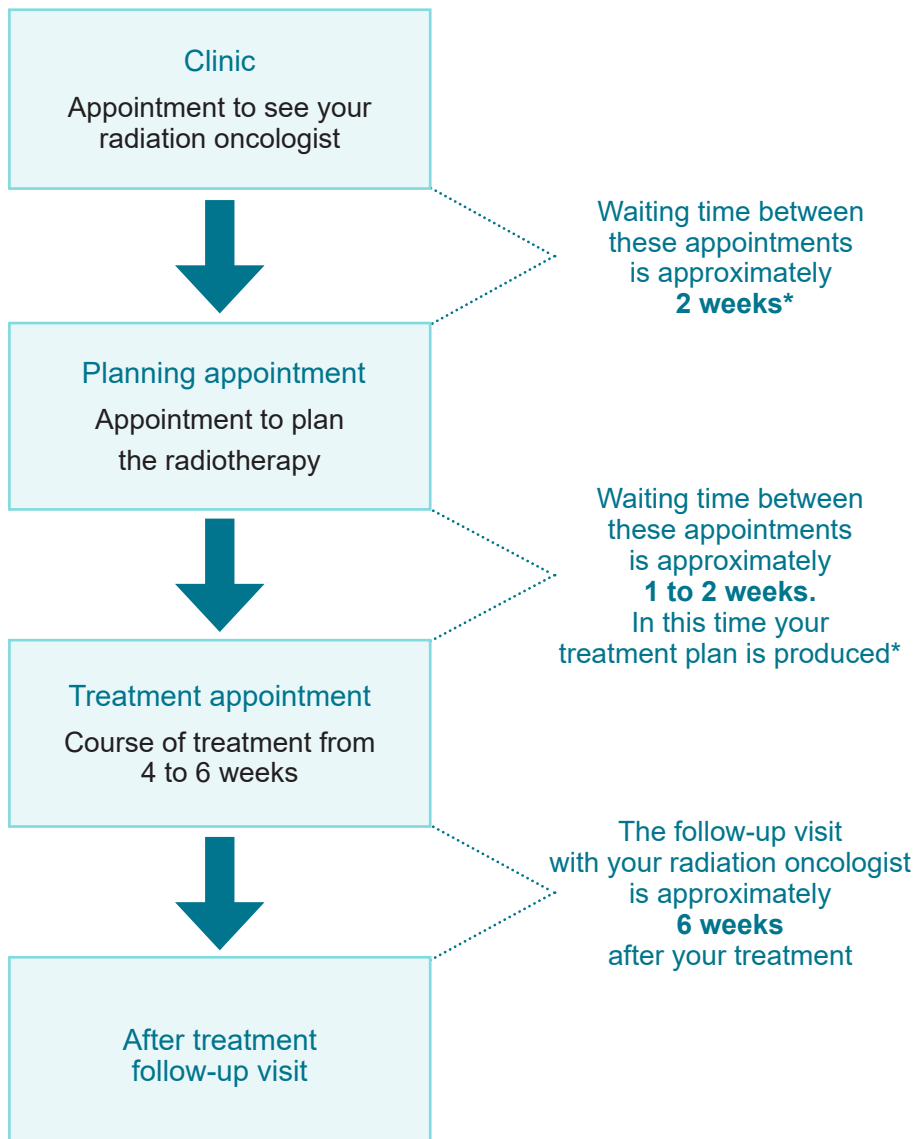
Contact: _____

What they do:

Advise and support you to maintain weight and nourishment when the treatment side effects make it harder to eat normally.

Your pathway

**The time could vary if you have other treatments to be coordinated.*





Linear accelerator

What is radiotherapy?



Radiotherapy uses x-ray beams to kill cancer cells.

A **linear accelerator** is a machine that delivers radiation to your body. It only gives radiation to the specific area that is being treated.

Your **radiation oncologist** will decide how much radiation you will

When deciding this, they will take into account:

- Your age
- Your overall health, including any other medical conditions you may have
- If you had surgery, the type of operation you had; and
- Details about your specific cancer. These include blood results, scans, the stage and exact location (site).

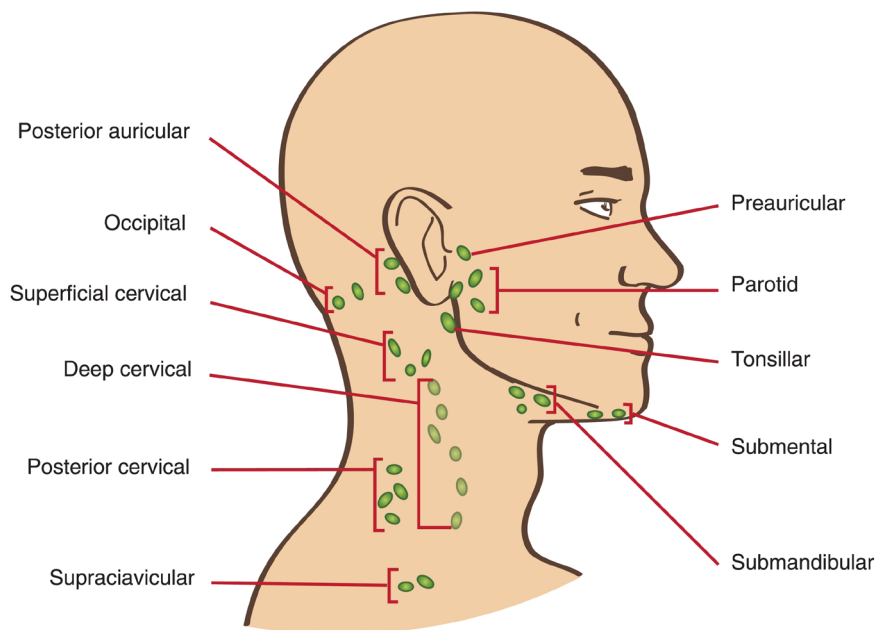
Sometimes, chemotherapy or antibody treatment is given during radiotherapy. For these treatments you will see a medical oncologist who will discuss this with you.

Only the areas required to be treated will be affected by the radiation.

For accurate treatment to the head and neck area, many patients need a mask to be made (see planning appointment, page.19) for their treatment.

Your radiation oncologist may recommend treating your lymph nodes as well. The lymph nodes treated will depend on your specific cancer (and will be discussed with you).

Lymph nodes of the neck and head



If relevant to you (female and childbearing age), the radiation oncologist will ask you if you are pregnant when you consent to treatment.

It is important to not get pregnant during treatment. If there is a chance you get pregnant, you will be asked to take a pregnancy test before the planning appointment and your treatment appointments.

What side effects can the treatment cause?

Radiotherapy can cause both short- and long-term side effects. Short-term side effects occur 10 to 14 days into your radiotherapy treatment.

Long-term side effects can occur months to years after your treatment has finished. Everybody reacts differently to the treatment and may not experience all side effects.

It is important that you stop smoking during radiotherapy. Smoking can increase the chance of side effects of the treatment as well as reduce the chances of being cured from your cancer.

Common short-term side effects

Sore throat and mouth

You may experience:

- A sore throat and mouth
- Ulcers in your mouth
- Problems swallowing. This may be severe in some people (see Feeding tube, page 16).

Dry mouth and throat

The saliva in your mouth may:

- Decrease in amount
- Become thick and be harder to cough up or swallow.

This depends on:

- The amount of salivary tissue in the treatment area.

Common short-term side effects continued

Skin

The skin reaction will depend on your treatment area and if you are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment at the same time.

- Your skin may become inflamed, reddened and feel hot, like a sunburn
- Sometimes it can blister and weep and require a dressing to help heal and feel more comfortable.

Fatigue/Tiredness

- The amount of tiredness varies for each person. It usually 'builds up' over the course of your treatment. Most patients will need some time off work. Others are able to continue working and carry out daily activities during radiotherapy.

Taste

- Your taste may change during the treatment
- Some foods may be unpleasant or have no taste
- Your favourite foods may not taste the same, and you may begin to like foods you did not like before
- Your taste will likely improve, but may take many months.

Hair loss

- Hair loss will be in the treated area only and is often temporary. Hair should start to grow back in 8 to 12 weeks after radiotherapy has finished
- Hair loss can be permanent in some cases.

Hoarse voice

If the voice box receives a large amount of radiation dose, your voice may become hoarse for a while.

Long-term side effects

Saliva

- The amount of saliva you have may remain much less than you had before. This may affect your ability to eat some foods.

Dental

- Radiotherapy to the mouth can make you more likely to get tooth decay after treatment. It is important to have regular dental checks every 3-6 months
- If you need to have teeth removed, it is very important that your dentist knows that you have had radiotherapy.

Jaw

- Depending on your treatment area, there may be damage to the jaw bone (osteonecrosis). This can produce pain, redness and numbness.

Skin

- The skin in the treatment area may feel firmer
- You may experience swelling under the chin 1 to 3 months after finishing treatment.

Ear pressure

- You may sometimes experience a blocked ear, like when you are landing on a plane. This may include difficulty hearing
- You may also have a feeling of fullness in the ears (eustachian tube dysfunction). This is usually temporary. (There are options for treatment if it does not settle after you have finished your treatment. Often this will go away without any treatment).

Notes

Preparing for your planning appointment

Mask preparation

To keep you stable and still during your treatment we will need to make a mask for you to have your treatment in.

Some people feel anxious about this, especially those who feel they may be claustrophobic. If you feel this will be a problem for you, please discuss this with your radiation oncologist before your planning appointment. We may be able to help you. Relaxation, meditation techniques and some medications can help.



Dental review

Before starting treatment, you will need to have your teeth checked by your dentist. The dentist will check for dental problems. If you need to have teeth removed, any swelling needs to have gone before your planning appointment.



Dentures and hearing aids

At your planning and treatment appointments, we will ask you to remove dentures and hearing aids.



Removing beards and bulky facial hair

Radiotherapy can make you lose hair in the treated area. We will need you to remove any beards or bulky facial hair before we can make the mask for your treatment. The mask needs to be firm throughout your treatment. Any hair loss during your treatment can make your mask loose which will not keep you still during your treatment.

Feeding tube

It is important to maintain nutrition and not lose weight during your radiotherapy - even if you are overweight. You may need a feeding tube to assist maintaining weight if you have difficulty swallowing and eating during your treatment. Your radiation oncologist will discuss with you the likelihood that you will need a tube. For some patients, this must be inserted before the treatment starts.

Ongoing advice and support will be provided by your specialist nurse and dietician.



Radiotherapy planning appointment

On this day we will give you information about the radiotherapy process. It is important to understand what is going to happen.

We will make equipment to keep you still, take a scan and mark the treatment area.

Please allow 1 to 2 hours for this appointment.

This appointment starts the planning process of your treatment.

Please feel free to ask questions.

Before or during this appointment you will also be given a Patient Reported Measures survey to complete. It will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete. The survey will ask you questions about your health and wellbeing. (More information on the next page).

An appointment card will be given to you. This will have your start date and treatment appointment times.

Identity check

Before we can start, please tell us:

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- What area on your body will be treated with radiotherapy.

This is a NSW Health requirement and helps us to identify you. It confirms we are treating the right person and part of your body. We will ask you this every day when you attend your radiotherapy treatment.

What are Patient Reported Measures (PRMs)?

- PRMs are a way for you to tell your healthcare team about your general wellbeing and provide feedback about your care.
- As part of our standard practice, you will be asked to complete a survey with questions to help us identify any issues that may be causing you worry and distress.
- It is important to complete this survey as it will help your health care providers understand more about how you are feeling, and how your health and treatment might be impacting different parts of your life.
- Our aim is to deliver the best health care for you.

Do I have to complete a survey?

- No, surveys are not compulsory.
- If you don't complete a survey, you will still receive the best care available. However, completing a survey gives your healthcare team more information about what is important to you.

When will I be asked to do the survey?

- You will be asked to do the survey before or during your planning appointment and again during treatment.



During the planning appointment

Your radiation oncologist may want to give you an injection called contrast. This will help them see the area to be treated on the CT scan, we will talk to you about this on the day of your planning appointment.

There are 3 steps to the planning appointment:

1. Make equipment for your treatment
2. Take a CT scan of the treatment area
3. Mark treatment area on mask and take photos.

1. Equipment

Equipment for under your head:

We will use special foam under your head and neck or a pre-shaped headrest that will fit your neck.

When we make the foam it will:

- Expand when you lie on it and then set to keep its shape
- Feel warm as it expands
- Not stick to your skin
- Sound very loud as it expands
- Cool as it moulds to your shape.



The foam will expand when you lie on it.



The foam will feel warm and sound loud when it expands



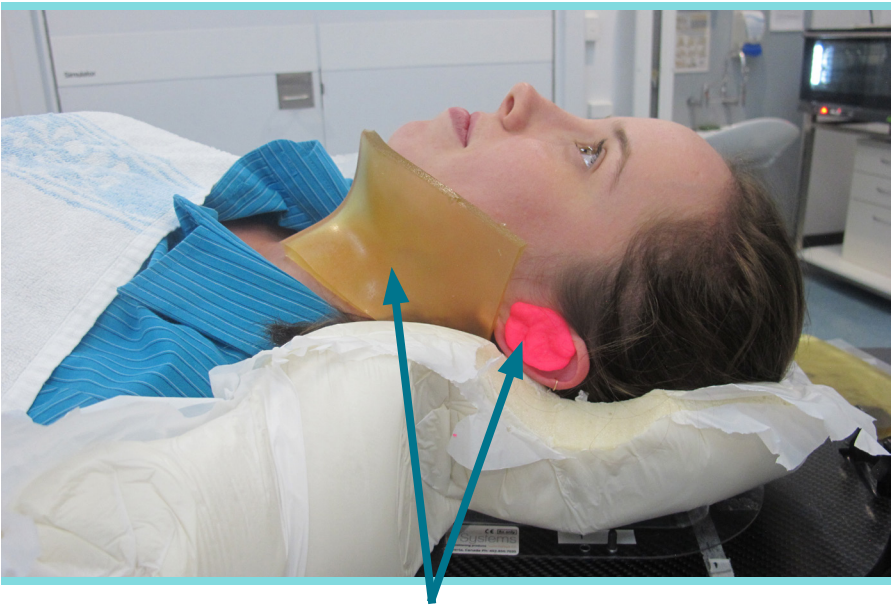
The foam sets to keep its shape.

Mask

We will make a mask for you to have your treatment in. The mask is made out of a special plastic material. We heat the mask to a warm temperature to make it soft so it is easy to mould to your face, neck and shoulders. It has holes so you are able to breathe.

The mask is important to keep you still during treatment. We will also use it to draw on your treatment area.

If required, we may place a jelly like or pink play dough material on your skin where you are being treated. This is called bolus. We use this when we need the radiation dose very close to your skin.



Example of bolus



The mask will feel quite warm when we first lay it on your skin.



We cool the mask with very cold towels to help it set. You may feel the mask tightening as it cools.



The mask is now set for your treatment.



2. CT (computed tomography) scan

Texta and sticky markers will be placed on your mask before the CT scan. These help us to map out the treatment area and can be seen on the scan.

A CT scan will be taken of your head and neck area.

You will need to lie still and breathe normally during this scan.

The staff will leave the room while the scan is being performed.

This scan is used to plan your treatment.



Laying on the CT bed with mask

3. Mark the treatment area

The area to be treated will be drawn on the mask after the CT scan. These marks will be used to put you in the same position on the treatment bed each day.

We will take photos of the way you are set up and the equipment that has been made for your treatment. This helps treatment staff set you up in the same position each day.

Radiotherapy planning

Your radiation team will create a plan for you between your planning appointment and the start of your treatment.

The CT (computed tomography) scan that was taken at your planning appointment is used to create the plan. It is designed specifically for you. This can take up to 2 weeks, depending on how difficult the individual plan is.

Sometimes the start of treatment can be delayed due to the difficulty of the plan.

Many checks are completed to make sure we are going to be delivering the right treatment for you.



Radiotherapy team

Radiotherapy treatment

You will receive radiotherapy daily. You will be set up in the same position as your planning appointment.

It will take 20 to 30 minutes for your treatment.

Treatment times

Treatment is usually 5 days a week, Monday to Friday.

You will be given a weekly list of appointment times, which you should check as they may change.

Treatment machines may need to be closed for maintenance. If you need treatment on those days, the staff will inform you.

Due to other patients receiving treatment. please inform the radiation therapists as soon as possible if you need to change an appointment or are running late.

Your first treatment appointment

On your first day, please come 15 minutes before your appointment time. Please see the nurses at the nurse's desk before you sit down.

A radiation therapist will explain what will happen and answer any questions you may have.

Your first treatment is usually longer than your other appointments. This is because we need to check measurements from your planning appointment.

Please allow an hour on your first day. This will allow us to give you all the information you need and deliver your treatment.

Arriving in radiotherapy

Please check yourself in for your treatment. You do this by scanning the barcode on your appointment card at the nurse's desk. If it is not your first treatment, once you have checked in you can take a seat in the waiting room.

A radiation therapist will come and get you when they are ready for you to have your treatment.

How long will my treatment take?

The time needed to deliver your treatment can be between 20 to 30 minutes.

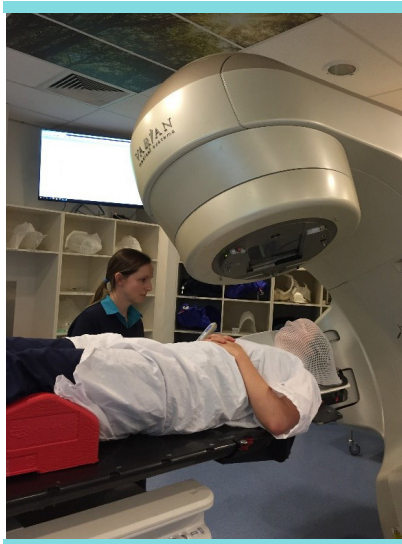
The time in the treatment room includes:

- Getting you into the correct position
- Delivering your treatment
- Helping you in and out of the room.

In the treatment room

Before we can give you your treatment, you will be asked to tell us:

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- What area on your body will be treated with radiotherapy.

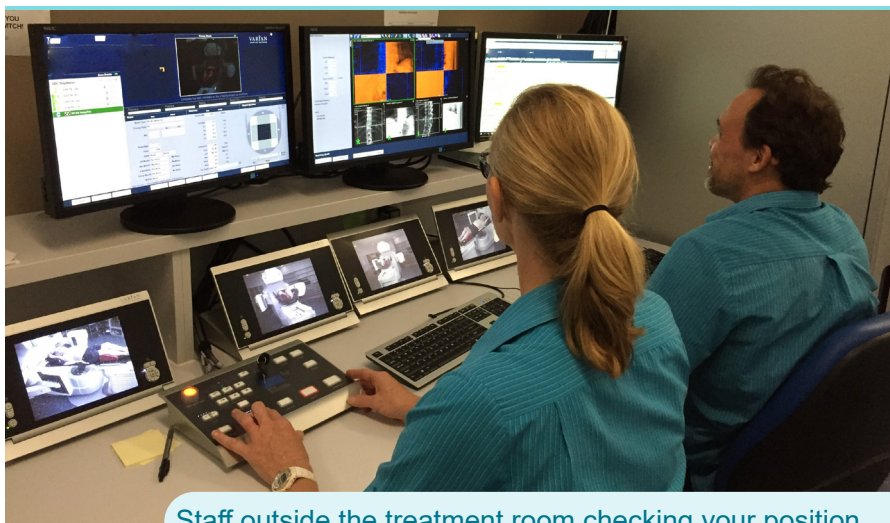


During your treatment you are able to listen to music. We can make a playlist for you, or you can bring in your own music.

Once you are in position, the radiation therapists will leave the room. They will then start the treatment. They can see and hear you during the treatment (the room has television monitors and an intercom).

When the radiation therapist leaves the treatment room:

- You will be in the room by yourself for 5 to 10 minutes
- It is important to lie still during the treatment and breathe normally
- Parts of the machine will move into position to take x-rays. These x-rays are taken before we give you your treatment to make sure everything lines up and we are treating the correct area.
- The treatment machine moves around you to give you your treatment, but it does not touch you
- You can alert us at any time by talking or raising your hand
- You will not be able to see or feel anything during the treatment, however you will hear a noise when the machine turns on.



Staff outside the treatment room checking your position

During your course of radiation treatment

All instructions given to you by the radiation staff need to be followed for every treatment.

Tell the radiation staff as soon as possible if you are not able to follow these instructions.

You will have x-rays taken throughout your treatment. This is to check the position of the treatment area. The x-rays are not used to check how treatment is working. Other measurements are also taken during your treatment. This is to check for any changes in your body shape.

It is important to try and maintain your weight during treatment. Any major changes in the shape and size of your body may change our calculations, which may require a new CT scan.

You will be formally reviewed once a week by the **Head & Neck Cancer Support and Therapy Service**. Every day during your treatment, the radiation team will check on your wellbeing. They will watch for side effects and any problems you may be having.

If you need more help, staff can arrange for you to see other members of your radiotherapy care team.

You will not feel any effects from the treatment directly after the appointment.



Managing side effects during treatment

Side effects generally start 2 to 3 weeks into your treatment.

In most cases, these symptoms will settle 2 to 4 weeks after completing radiotherapy.

You will be reviewed weekly by the Head & Neck Cancer Support and Therapy Service.

They will monitor your weight and help you manage your symptoms and any side effects you may experience during and after your treatment.

Sometimes it is necessary for inpatient care to manage severe side effects.

The Head & Neck Cancer Support and Therapy Service will also provide support and guide you on the type of food and drink that is best for you at the weekly review and manage tube feeding if required.

At this appointment you will see a:

- Clinical nurse consultant
- Dietitian
- Speech pathologist.

Also, you will need to attend this clinic appointment **after** your radiotherapy treatment.

This appointment will not appear on your printed radiotherapy schedule.

Do not wait for a review day to inform staff if you notice any changes in the treatment area including:

- Dry mouth, taste, swallowing
- Skin changes
- Pain
- Nausea and vomiting.

If you are having any of the above symptoms, or unable to tolerate fluids contact radiation staff who can arrange an early review.

If you are concerned or unable to tolerate fluids after hours go to the emergency department.



General mouth care during and after treatment

You will need to start your daily mouth care from your **first day of treatment**.

It is important to keep your mouth clean and moist. It is good to rinse your mouth after you have eaten or drunk anything other than water.

Use either mouthwash option:

- 1/4 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in 1 cup of warm water, or
- 1/4 teaspoon salt in 1 cup of warm water, or
- an alcohol-free mouthwash.

Other suggestions for daily care of your mouth:

- Keep a bottle of water with you and take regular sips
- If you have full or partial dentures, leave them out as much as possible and soak them
- You can continue to gently floss if there is no bleeding.

The following table should be used for the daily care of your mouth:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| After breakfast | Brush your teeth with your usual toothpaste and a very soft toothbrush Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |
| Mid morning | Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |
| After lunch | Brush your teeth Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |
| Mid afternoon | Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |
| After dinner | Brush your teeth Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |
| Before going to bed | Mouthwash. Rinse mouth and expel liquid. |

Throat / Swallowing

We encourage all patients to keep swallowing if it is safe to do so. This will help in returning to normal swallowing when treatment finishes.

Skin care

It is important that you do not shave with a razor blade in the treatment area during your treatment, you may use an electric razor if you have one.

You will need to start your daily skincare from the first day of your treatment.

You will be given cream to apply to the treatment area daily.

If you have been given **sorbolene** cream, apply:

- After every treatment
- At bedtime
- As often as you like, but not within two hours of your next treatment.

If you have been given **StrataXRT** cream, apply:

- One to two times daily - as directed by staff.

If you are unsure of where or how much cream to apply, please talk to the radiation therapists or nursing.

You will also need to follow the general skin care advice section on the following page during your radiation treatment.

Please do not use any other products on your skin in the treatment area without checking with your treating team first. Some products may make your skin reaction worse.

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General skin care during your treatment



Wear loose clothing during treatment. We only require you to remove the top half of clothing for treatment. A singlet can be worn underneath the mask.



Do not apply soap directly to the treatment area



Have a quick shower every day. Use warm, rather than hot water



Do not apply any oils, colognes, lotions or talcum powders to the treatment area.



Use a mild soap such as Dove Sensitive Skin Unscented®, Aveeno Moisturising Bar®, Goat Milk or other unscented soap



Do not shave with a razor-blade. You can use an electric razor.



Gently pat dry the treatment area with a clean towel



Start moisturising from the first day of treatment (do not apply any cream within 2 hours before your treatment)



Protect yourself from the sun. Wear a hat and stay in the shade.



Fatigue / Tiredness

To help manage your tiredness during your treatment:

- Try some light exercise when you are feeling least tired during the day
- Keep a diary to see what time of the day you are most tired
- Listen to music/read books
- Meditate or use relaxation exercises
- Spread out and prioritise what you need to get done over the day
- Ask others for help
- Rest when you need to, but limit daytime naps to 45 minutes.

Physical activity

Many studies have shown that exercise during radiation treatment can ease side effects, including fatigue and sleeping problems.

- Exercise can be walking, running, group classes or gym workouts
- If you currently exercise, try maintain your current exercise habits
- If you do not currently exercise and want to start, please discuss with your radiation oncologist, nurse consultant or general practitioner. You may be referred to a local program, for example CanConquer.

It is important you let your radiation team know if you are having any concerns as soon as possible. It is important for you to keep drinking fluids and eating during your treatment.

Notes



After radiotherapy

On your last day of treatment, a follow-up appointment will be booked with your radiation oncologist in about 6 weeks.

Any side effects that you have had during your treatment should start to improve around 2 weeks after your treatment has finished.

Last treatment

On completing your last treatment we will:

- Ensure you have cream to apply if required
- Tell you who to contact if you have any skin or other treatment related problems
- Let you know the day and time of your weekly review with the Head & Neck Cancer Support and Therapy Service
- Make a follow-up appointment for you with your radiation oncologist.

After treatment

On completion of your treatment, side effects may get worse. We provide regular follow-up at the Head & Neck Support and Therapy Service until your side effects have improved and you are back eating adequately.

During this weekly review, we will ask you questions. This is about how you are feeling, if you have any concerns, side effects or pain. We can provide strategies to manage them.

Skin care after treatment

For the two weeks after radiotherapy, we need you to continue to look after your skin.

Your skin changes can be worse about 10 to 14 days after treatment is finished. Your skin usually starts to improve after this time.

If the area is dry, red or itchy, continue to apply cream several times a day until healed.

If your skin is broken and there are moist areas, you may require a dressing. Your treating team will advise you on how to look after your skin.

Any redness of the skin will usually improve 4 to 6 weeks after finishing your radiotherapy.

Fatigue

The tiredness you may have felt during treatment will improve after a few weeks.

Follow up appointment

Your first follow-up appointment with your radiation oncologist will be 4 to 6 weeks after you have finished your treatment. This will have been booked on your last day of treatment.

You will be able to discuss concerns and ask any questions.

During this appointment side effects that you may have had during your treatment will be discussed to ensure they are improving and being managed. Your skin should be healed. You should also have more energy.

After this appointment you will need to attend regular follow up reviews. They will be every few months for several years. These appointments are important to make sure everything is going well and to answer any questions you may have.

Ongoing follow up care

After treatment, follow-up care is important for your long-term health.

Your follow-up care will depend on the type, stage of cancer and the treatment you had.

Follow-up care should be agreed between your radiation oncologists, general practitioner, any other health professionals involved in your care, and takes into consideration your preference.

In some cases, people will need ongoing hospital care for several years. In other cases, an arrangement with your general practitioner may be suitable.

Frequently asked questions



Will radiation therapy be painful?

While treatment is being delivered, you will not see or feel anything. The delivery of radiation is like having an X-ray or CT scan. You will hear the machine making a buzzing sound.

Will I be 'radioactive'?

No, receiving radiotherapy will not leave you radioactive at any time. It is safe to be with family, children, friends and pregnant women.

Should I take medications and/or vitamins while receiving treatment?

Some vitamins or supplements could impact on the treatment. It is important to tell your radiation oncologist all the medicines, supplements and vitamins you are currently taking. Continue to take your prescribed medicines as normal.

Will I lose my hair?

Radiotherapy only effects the area being treated. You will only lose hair in the treated area. This could be the hair on the head or any facial hair you may have in the treatment area. Please ask staff for more information specific to you.

Can I have a Covid-19, flu or tetanus vaccination?

Yes, it is safe to receive these vaccinations while you are having your treatment.

Where can I park during treatment?

Free parking is available while you are having your treatment (not for appointments with doctors).

Illawarra Cancer Care Centre: You can park in front of the centre, accessed by New Dapto Road. You will be given a unique passcode to open the boomgate.

Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre: You can park at the rear of the centre. Go to the boom gate, take a ticket from the machine and have it validated at the main reception desk.



How long will treatment take?

The length (or course) of radiation is based on the specific plan designed for you by your doctor. Generally, you will be in and out of the centre within 30-60 minutes. Delays may occur on some days.

How much does treatment cost?

Medicare covers all costs (for those eligible for Medicare).

Is there a problem if I missed a scheduled treatment?

Radiation treatment is small daily treatments to get the best outcome. Once treatment has started it is important that the rest are not delayed or missed. Sometimes medical reasons can cause a treatment to be delayed or missed. If this happens, your radiation oncologist will discuss this with you.

What should I wear to treatment?

Wear loose fitting cotton clothes. Don't wear clothes that are tight or that may rub the treatment area. Once you arrive, you will be asked to change into a gown in the change room in preparation for treatment.

Can I get the treatment area wet or go swimming during treatment?

Showering / swimming in salt water is fine. Swimming in chlorinated pools is not recommended. Pat the skin dry, do not rub it.

What happens if I lose/gain weight while I'm having my radiotherapy?

The dietitian will provide you with advice and support to maintain a stable weight. This is very important for your recovery. The radiation therapists will monitor any changes in your body shape during your treatment. They will take measurements each day. If your body changes too much a new plan may be needed.

Resources



Online resources for additional information about your radiotherapy:

- Targeting Cancer – www.targetingcancer.com.au
- Cancer Council – www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment/radiotherapy.html
- eviQ Cancer Treatments Online- www.eviq.org.au/eviQNavigationPatientsandCarers.aspx
- Head & Neck Cancer Aust. <https://www.headandneckcancer.org.au/>
- Tips for managing taste and smell changes: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-information/managing-cancer-side-effects/taste-and-smell-changes/managing-changes/>

Locally run programs

Look Good Feel Better – Free community service program designed to assist and manage the appearance related side effects of chemotherapy/radiotherapy, call 1800 650 960.

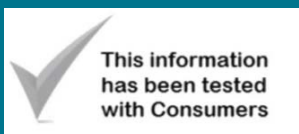
CanConquer – Specialist allied health team providing targeted exercise and education for the patient pre, during and post cancer treatment. Please speak to your CNC to find out the referral process of attending CanConquer or call 02 4207 9999 (Illawarra).

Ask your clinical nurse consultant for more recommended information and resources

Cancer Council information

Cancer Council information is available on Level 2 at the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre and the main foyer at the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre.

There is a range of information and volunteers available to assist at both centres.



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If you would like to provide feedback on this booklet, please email ISLHD-ISCAHN@health.nsw.gov.au