



SC ONCOLOGY
ASSOCIATES

MySCOA Guidebook

Radiation Oncology



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Radiation Oncology

Understanding Your Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy uses high-energy beams to damage or destroy cancer cells. The goal of radiation therapy is to kill cancer cells with as little exposure as possible to surrounding healthy cells.

Radiation therapy can be used to treat different types of cancer, either alone, concurrently with chemotherapy, or before/after surgery.

Radiation may also be given once cancer has spread to the bone to help relieve pain.

Linear Accelerator

The radiation treatment machine is called a Linear Accelerator. It treats cancer patients with high-energy radiation, which you cannot see or feel.

Radiation treatments are not painful, but it is very important not to move while on the treatment table to ensure accuracy. The linear accelerator has the capability to take X-rays and use a CT for alignment purposes. These are not diagnostic images. They are used for alignment purposes only.

Treatment Marks on Skin

Treatment marks will be covered by clear stickers on your skin. These marks are important for treatment precision. Please be careful with these marks and keep them in place. While bathing please do not scrub at the stickers and we ask that you pat the stickers dry with a towel when drying off. When using lotions please be careful not to use too much around the stickers because this may cause the stickers to come off. Your radiation therapist will be checking stickers daily to ensure they remain intact and will replace them as needed.

Steps to Getting Started

1. CT Simulation / Planning

After you have seen your physician in consultation, you will be scheduled for a nondiagnostic CT scan that will load your images into our computer system for planning. You will also receive your temporary markings at this appointment.

2. Planning

When your radiation plan is completed, you will come in for a verification simulation where you will be set up on the linear accelerator to ensure that everything is just right. At the end of that simulation appointment, you will receive your treatment schedule.

3. Begin Treatment

You will begin receiving your radiation treatments 1-3 business days after your verification planning appointment. Treatments will be at the same time each day.

Radiation Treatment Schedule

Treatment times are generally given Monday through Friday, from 7 am – 5 pm. We have three treatment machines:



We Have Three Treatment Machines at SCOA

You will be treated on the same machine each day. A patient may arrive after you but can be called back before you if their machine is available.



Please be on Time

If you are early or late, we will still treat you but you will be worked back into the schedule as efficiently as possible.



Most Treatments Take 30 Minutes Each Day

You can expect to spend 30 minutes to 1 hour in the clinic each day. The majority of this time is spent in the waiting room and getting lined up on the machine for treatment. Most radiation is very short and given between 3-10 minutes.



Conflicting Appointments

We understand that patients may have other doctor appointments and chemo treatments. Please let your therapist know if you will have another appointment that conflicts with your assigned radiation treatment time.



You Will See Your Radiation Oncologist Once a Week During Treatment

Dr. Stone – Monday
Dr. Zamdborg – Tuesday
Dr. Blas – Wednesday
Dr. Meyer - Thursday



We ask that you are ready at your appointment time.

This means that if you need to use the bathroom prior to treatment or change into a gown prior to treatment, you should arrive in time to do that and be ready to be treated at your appointment time.

Managing Radiation Side Effects

Most radiation side effects typically affect the specific area being radiated. For example, when treating the brain, you may experience hair loss on your head, but you would not be itchy on your chest due to brain radiation. Side effects generally begin 1-2 weeks into treatment and may peak 1-2 weeks after treatment is completed, then healing will begin.

Skin Reactions

- become dry, itchy, flaky and/or more sensitive
- discolor or darken
- increase in redness, or show a pink tinge
- have dry and or moist peeling (desquamation) and/or ulceration
- continue to get more irritated and the skin may get pinker or darker in the treatment area, especially where there are skin folds or where there is skin-on-skin contact. An example of this would be under the armpit, under the breast, between legs, etc.

Skin side effects will progress over the course of treatment and may peak 1-2 weeks after treatment is complete.

After the peak, skin will begin the healing process.

Skin Care

- **Wash skin with mild soap** (ex. Dove) and lukewarm water using a soft washcloth or by just letting water and soap flow over skin
- **Pat skin dry.** Do NOT rub skin with towel
- **Do not use any creams or lotions in the treatment area** throughout the entire course of treatment unless it is AQUAPHOR or your doctor has prescribed one to be used during radiation.
- **Wear loose-fitting clothing**
- **Protect treated skin** from sun, wind and any extreme temperature. Since Skin is more sensitive after receiving radiation, be sure to use 50+ (SPF) sunscreen with UVA/UVB
- **Avoid scratching skin**
- **Avoid using a heating pad or an ice pack on your skin** as this may irritate your skin.
- **Avoid use of hot tubs, swimming pools and lakes** during treatment
- **AQUAPHOR is recommended** to use during treatment to keep skin moisturized. It can be purchased at any grocery or drug store.
- **Do NOT put any creams or lotions** on the treated area within FOUR hours prior to treatment.

Fatigue

It is common to experience fatigue during radiation, and for a few weeks after radiation treatment.

However, this is not a debilitating fatigue. **You may be more tired at the end of the day.**

Stay Active

Activity has been shown to help reduce fatigue.

Stay Hydrated

64 oz per day is recommended for adequate hydration.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is important during radiation treatment.

There are no suggested dietary changes as long as you are:

- able to tolerate your food
- having normal bowel movements
- maintaining your weight

If you are having difficulty with nausea, indigestion, or eating full meals you may try:

- **Eating 5-6 small meals per day 2-3 hours apart** may reduce nausea and indigestion
- **Limit or avoid greasy, fatty and/or spicy foods**

If you are experiencing diarrhea or vomiting:

- Try a diet that consists mostly of bananas, rice, apples (or applesauce), and toast (or crackers) until the GI upset subsides. This is a bland diet and is usually tolerated well.

If your treatment causes you to have a sore throat or difficulty swallowing, you can use nutritional supplements to help receive the nutrients and calories your body needs.

Non-Diabetics: Ensure, Premier Protein, Core Power, Boost, Generic Brands

Diabetics: Boost, Glucerna, Premier Protein, Diabetic Generic Brands ** Ensure and Premier Protein brands offer a “clear” option that is non-milk-based

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Constipation

Over-the-counter medications can be purchased at any pharmacy.

Please ask your local pharmacist for assistance to find these products at the pharmacy of your choice. Keep in mind that these are **only suggested** medications, please follow any orders prescribed by your physician.



Miralax (Brand name) or ClearLAX (Equate brand in Walmart)

To keep stools regular- take daily. If you are taking narcotics or opioid pain medication you should take this daily unless you have diarrhea.



Senokot (Brand Name) or Natural Laxative (Equate brand in Walmart)

Take at night if you have not had a bowel movement that day and you have already taken the Miralax/ ClearLAX.



Magnesium Citrate

Take half a bottle in the morning if you have not had a stool for 2 days. If you do not have a bowel movement by lunchtime, take the other half of the bottle. Do not use Magnesium Citrate more than once a week.

Diarrhea

If you are experiencing diarrhea and are not able to keep down fluids and you are using Imodium please notify your nurse. We want to prevent dehydration and skin breakdown related to diarrhea.



Loperamide (Imodium)

Take 2 (2mg) capsules for the first dose and then one capsule after each loose stool until the loose stool stops. You may only take up to 8 total capsules in a 24-hour period.