

Radiotherapy Information Sheet

Introduction

Radiotherapy uses radiation beam to kill cancer cells while preserving nearby normal tissues as much as possible. Radiotherapy can be delivered in several ways, with different machines, techniques, number of treatment fractions and dosage. The oncologist will choose the best treatment method for you.

For head and neck cancer, external high energy beams are usually used for radiotherapy treatment, which is usually given 5 or 6 times a week for 6 to 7 weeks. It could be used concurrently with chemotherapy. The radiation beams do not make you radioactive, therefore it is safe for you to contact with people, including infants or pregnant woman, after receiving the treatment.

Procedures

1. Moulding procedure

To immobilize and reproduce your head and neck position during treatment, therapists and technicians will customize an aquaplastic mask for each patient with or without a mouthbite.

2. Computer Tomography scan

Patient will be positioned with customized mould on couch in CT scan. The CT scan acquires 3D images for oncologist to determine the treatment region.

3. Treatment planning

With the aid of computer, the most suitable treatment plan will be generated to achieve oncologist's goals. The process takes several days since the dose will be calculated repeatedly to attain the best result.

4. Treatment

No pain will be experienced during the radiotherapy treatment, it is similar to taking an X-ray. You only have to put on your own customized mask lying on top of the treatment couch. Radiation therapists will position your body, then leave the room and monitor your condition closely through the CCTV. You can speak to the therapists through the intercom or press the call bell should you have urgent needs. After verification and readjustment by the treatment machine, the radiation beam will be delivered. The treatment takes around 20 to 30 minutes and please lie still during the whole process.

Patient's Label Patient Name: _____ Hospital No: _____ Episode No: _____
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**Radiotherapy Treatment for
Head&Neck Region**

Radiotherapy Treatment for Head&Neck Region

Common side effects and coping approaches

Side effect	Coping approaches
General: Fatigue Nausea Loss of appetite Change of taste Stiffness in jaw	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get plenty of rest to restore energy 2. Try small frequent meals with high energy and protein inclusive 3. Cut food into small pieces, eat small bites slowly 4. Avoid alcohol or alcoholic beverage 5. Consume wide variety food to stimulate your taste 6. Maintain oral hygiene, use soft-haired toothbrush after meal 7. Exercise your jaw regularly to reduce stiffness
Dry mouth Sore throat Hoarseness Mucositis or ulcer Swallowing difficulty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drink water or electrolytes frequently to keep mouth moist 2. Switch on humidifier if the weather is dry 3. Fresh fruit juice, tea, milk or honey is recommended 4. Avoid irritating food such as spicy, salty, oily, deep-fry or hard food 5. Use alcohol-free mouthwash before meals if necessary 6. Suck liquid food with straw to reduce irritation 7. Ask doctor for painkiller if necessary 8. Keep body weight otherwise Ryles tubing is suggested for severe case
Skin reactions Dry and itchy Reddening Sensitive, tender, sore Peeling or blistering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid rubbing, scrubbing or scratching the treatment area 2. Keep short fingernails to prevent accidental scratching of skin 3. Wash skin with warm water only and gently pat dry with soft towel 4. Do not use non-prescribed gel, cream, perfume or deodorants 5. Wear loose collar clothes to avoid friction on treatment area 6. Avoid exposing treatment area under sunlight by using an umbrella 7. Avoid swimming, spa or sauna during treatment and 2 weeks afterwards 8. For men, use electrical shavers if necessary
Hair loss	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hair regenerates after treatment 2. Use mild non-irritating baby shampoo or conditioners 3. Do not perm hair otherwise further causing broken hair

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Points for attention

- Radiotherapy can cause teratogenicity. Therefore, both male and female patients should take contraceptive measures during radiotherapy.
- Radiotherapy may affect the function of pacemaker. Please inform our staff if you have a cardiac pacemaker.
- Please inform doctor and radiotherapists if you have undergone radiotherapy. Additional radiation on previous treatment site might cause severe complications.
- Consult doctor or radiotherapists for any illness or severe skin reaction such as liquid oozing and breakdown of skin.
- The skin reaction will gradually subside 2-3 weeks after the treatment. During this period, you should continue the above skin care procedures.

Disclaimer

This leaflet only provides general information pertaining to this operation / procedure. While common risks and complications are described, the list is not exhaustive, and the degree of risk could also vary between patients. Please contact your doctor for detailed information and specific enquiry.

Reference

HA Smart Patients

<https://www21.ha.org.hk/smartpatient/SPW/en-us/Disease-Information/Disease/?guid=3811ed4c-10bc-43f3-bfcc-e8ea8d747619>

Cancer Research UK

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/treatment/radiotherapy/side-effects>

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Patient's Signature: _____ Date: _____