

Radiotherapy Information Sheet

Introduction

Radiotherapy uses radiation beam to kill breast cancer cells while preserving nearby normal tissues as much as possible. Radiotherapy can be delivered in several ways, with different machines, techniques, number of treatments (called fractions) and dosage. The oncologist will choose suitable treatment method for each patient.

For breast cancer, external high energy beams are usually used for radiotherapy treatment, which is usually given 5 times a week for 3 to 5 weeks. It can be used after surgery and chemotherapy to kill remaining cancer cells. The radiation beam does not make you radioactive, therefore it is safe to contact with people, including infants and pregnant woman, after having the treatment.

Procedure

1. Moulding procedure

To immobilize and reproduce the position of the body during treatment, therapists will customize a mould for each and every patient. It is mainly to immobilize the head, neck and arms regions.

2. Computer Tomography scan

Patient will be positioned on the customized mould to simulate the treatment position for the CT scan. Therapist will then draw markings on the skin for treatment positioning reference. The CT scan gives a 3D image for the oncologist to determine the treatment region.

3. Treatment planning

With the aid of computer, a most appropriate treatment plan will be calculated to achieve doctor's expectation. The process may take several days since the plan 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 lie on your own customized mould on top of the treatment couch. The radiation therapists will position your body for treatment according to your skin marks. They will then leave the room and monitor your condition closely through the CCTV. You can speak to the therapist through the intercom should you have urgent needs. After verification and readjustment by the treatment machine, the radiation beam will be delivered at certain angle for treatment purpose. The treatment takes around 15-20 minutes and please lie still during the whole process.

Patient's Label

Patient Name: _____

Hospital No: _____

Episode No: _____

Common side effects and coping approaches

Side effects vary from person to person so you might not have all the side effects mentioned

Side effect	Coping approaches
Skin problems Dryness, itchiness, redness, darkening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash the treatment area gently with lukewarm water then pad dry with clean soft cloth Avoid using soap or body wash Do not applying skin care products, perfumes and deodorants on treatment area unless instructed by doctor
Severe skin problems (Rare) Liquid oozing and breakdown of skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not rub, scratch and scrub the skin Avoid using heat and cooling packs on the treatment area Do not apply tapes or dressings on skin unless instructed by doctor or radiotherapist Wear soft and loosely fitting cotton clothing. Try to wear wireless bra top to reduce rubbing against the skin Avoid swimming, spa and sauna Bring an umbrella with you if sun exposure could not be avoided
Swelling of breast or chest (Lymphoedema) Stiffness of arm and shoulder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise and stretching of the arms Avoid lifting heavy objects with your arm on affected side
Tiredness and fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get enough rest and sleep Light to moderate exercise can make you feel better but do not overdo it Drink more water and take a balanced diet

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 your pacemaker. Please inform our staff if you have a cardiac pacemaker
- Please inform doctor and radiotherapists if you have undergone radiotherapy. Additional radiation treatment to 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

<p>Patient's Label Patient Name: _____ Hospital No: _____ Episode No: _____</p>
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Radiotherapy Treatment for Breast Cancer

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>

<p>Patient's Label Patient Name: _____ Hospital No: _____ Episode No: _____</p>

Patient's Signature: _____ Date: _____