

Your First Day of Radiation Therapy: What to Expect!

Welcome! Today is your first day of radiation therapy, and we understand you might have some questions or feel a little nervous. That's completely normal! We're here to guide you through every step, making sure you feel comfortable and informed.

This first day is often a bit longer than future appointments because we'll be doing some important final checks.

Before You Arrive:

- **Eat and Drink Normally:** Unless your care team has given you specific instructions (like for certain head/neck or abdominal treatments), please eat and drink as you normally would. Being well-nourished can help you feel better.
- **Take Your Medications:** Take any prescribed medications as usual, unless your doctor has told you otherwise.
- **Dress Comfortably:** Wear loose, comfortable clothing that you can easily move in. You might need to change into a gown for your treatment.
- **Arrive Early:** Please plan to arrive a bit earlier than your scheduled appointment time. This gives you time to check in and relax.

When You Get Here:

1. **Check-In:** When you arrive, please check in at the front desk. Our friendly staff will confirm your appointment and guide you on where to go.
2. **Meet Your Team (Again!):** You've likely met some of us already, but today you'll get to know the team who will be with you for your daily treatments. This often includes:
 - **Radiation Therapists:** These are the people who operate the radiation machine and are with you during your treatment. They'll help you get into position and make sure everything is just right.
 - **Nurses:** They are always available to answer your questions, help with any side effects, and provide support.
 - **Physicists/Dosimetrists (Behind the Scenes):** These experts make sure the radiation machine is working perfectly and that your treatment plan is precise.
3. **Last-Minute Questions?** Don't hesitate to ask! This is your opportunity to voice any last-minute questions or concerns you might have before your treatment starts.

During Your Treatment Session:

1. **Getting into Position:** Your radiation therapists will help you get into the exact same position you were in during your "simulation" (the planning session where they created your custom mold or setup). This is super important to make sure the radiation goes to precisely the right spot. They might use special molds, cushions, or rests to help you stay still and comfortable.
2. **"Setup" Time:** The therapists will spend a few minutes making sure you are perfectly aligned. They might use laser lights on the walls to help them. They'll also take a few quick images (like X-rays) before your treatment starts, just to confirm that you are positioned correctly and the radiation will target the right area. This is a normal and important safety step.
3. **The Treatment Itself:**
 - Once you're in position, the therapists will step out of the room. They'll be watching you closely on monitors the entire time and can hear you if you need anything.
 - The radiation machine (called a linear accelerator) will move around you to deliver the treatment from different angles. You might hear some humming or buzzing sounds, but the machine will **not** touch you.
 - **You won't feel anything during the treatment.** Radiation therapy is painless. It's just like getting an X-ray.
 - **It's important to stay still** during the treatment itself, but you can breathe normally.
 - The actual treatment time (when the machine is on) is usually very short, often only a few minutes. The setup time is usually longer than the treatment delivery.
4. **When It's Over:** The therapists will come back into the room, help you off the treatment table, and you'll be done for the day!

After Your First Treatment:

- **You are NOT radioactive:** The radiation does not stay in your body. You are completely safe to be around family, friends, and even children right after your treatment.
- **Go About Your Day:** Most people feel fine after their first treatment and can go about their normal activities.

- **Side Effects:** You likely won't feel any side effects on your very first day. Side effects usually develop gradually over a few weeks into your treatment course. Your team will talk to you about what specific side effects to watch for and how to manage them.
- **Support is Here:** Remember, your entire care team is here for you throughout your journey. Never hesitate to ask questions, no matter how small they seem.

We are so glad you're here, and we're ready to start your treatment journey with you!