



## Patient Information

### WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE RECEIVING RADIATION THERAPY TO THE CHEST AREA

#### Oncology

Vitalité      Zone:  1B    4    5    6  
Facility: \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Léon-Richard Oncology Centre

#### **In this document you will find information on:**

- The main steps to prepare for radiation therapy;
- Where to find more information on skin care during radiation therapy;
- The most common side effects and how to better manage them;
- The end of treatments.

A team of health professionals, including a radiation oncologist, radiation therapy nurses, radiation therapists and a dietitian, will provide you and your family with support and information throughout your treatments.

Feel free to ask questions when you come for your treatments each day.

The radiation therapists or nurses will try to answer your questions and will speak to your radiation oncologist if deemed necessary.

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE RECEIVING RADIATION THERAPY TO THE CHEST AREA

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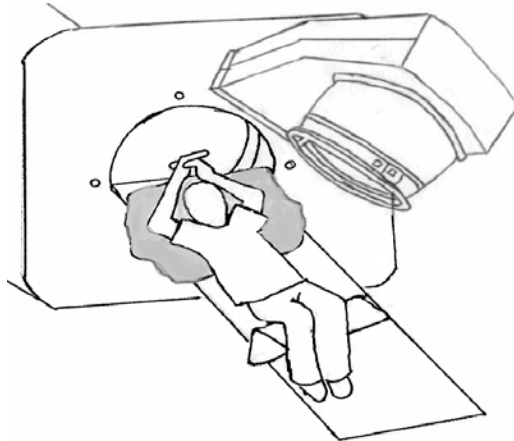
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# WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE RECEIVING RADIATION THERAPY TO THE CHEST AREA

## Planning my radiation therapy

Planning is an important step to ensure that you receive the best possible treatment. You probably will not receive any radiation therapy on the day of your planning appointment.

To help you maintain the necessary position during both this step and the radiation therapy treatments, you will probably be lying on a special cushion with your arms above your head.



Staff will probably put a special belt around your waist to measure movements during respiration. Then they will use a CT simulator to identify the area of treatment.

- You must not move.
- You have to breathe normally during the procedure.

The radiation therapists will also draw marks on your skin. The ink may stain your clothes.

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**You must keep these marks on your skin and wash the area gently to make sure not to erase them.**

Plan on staying for about one hour during that appointment

### **When will I be informed of the dates for my planning and radiation therapy appointments?**

You can expect a phone call a few days after your appointment with your radiation oncologist. You will be informed of the date and time for your planning appointment (CT simulator).

When you come for that appointment, the staff will give you the date and time of your first radiation therapy appointment.

### **Where do I go for my planning and radiation therapy appointments?**

You will have to register at the reception desk on level 0 at the Oncology Centre for **all** your appointments. Patients are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes before their appointments.

### **What will happen during radiation therapy?**

Once you will be installed on the treatment table, the radiation therapists will check the measurements from your CT simulation scan. They may take x-rays to ensure that you are in the correct position for treatment. Then they will start the radiation treatment.

External radiation therapy is painless. You will not see or feel the rays. You will notice that the treatment machine turns around you and makes noise.

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### **How long is the treatment?**

You should plan to be at the Oncology Centre for 30 to 45 minutes every day. Treatments will take about 15 minutes. Most of this time is used to make sure that you are in the right position for treatment.

### **What skin changes can I expect?**

- You may have skin changes in the treatment area. This is a normal side effect and it will get better after radiation therapy.
- Your skin may feel irritated after 3 weeks of treatments.
- It will begin to heal about 2 to 3 weeks after completing your radiation treatments.

To know how to care for your skin, read the pamphlet:

**SKIN CARE DURING EXTERNAL RADIATION THERAPY**

### **What can I do to reduce side effects to my skin?**

- Wear loose, soft clothing. Cotton is a good choice. So is a sports bra.
- If the region treated includes the armpit, use unscented deodorant (only if the skin is not open or peeling). If you need to shave your armpit, use an electric razor.
- Do not expose the treated area directly to sunlight. Try to keep it covered with clothing.

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### **Will I feel more tired than usual during radiation therapy?**

- Fatigue is a common side effect.
- You may feel tired during radiation therapy.
- This varies with each person but often begins early in the treatment and can increase gradually during treatment.
- Continue doing your usual activities if you feel well enough to do so.

### **Here is some advice if you are feeling very tired:**

- Pace yourself, especially with activities that make you feel tired.
- Ask for help with activities that are hard to manage.
- Pick a relaxing activity or hobby that you are able to do.
- Walk for 30 minutes, 4 to 5 times a week.
- Keep a regular sleep routine and rest as you need during the day.
- Limit naps to 45 minutes.
- Eat well and drink plenty of fluids.
- Aim for healthy, balanced meals.
- Ask for help preparing meals.
- Eat at regular hours throughout the day and add snacks if you need to.

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### **Will I have a sore throat or difficulty swallowing?**

Radiation to the chest may cause irritation of the esophagus (the tube that food passes through when you swallow).

What you may feel:

- Heartburn
- A sensation of blockage in your esophagus
- Pain on swallowing food
- Difficulty swallowing food

### **What you can do if you have a sore throat or difficulty swallowing:**

- Avoid acid, spicy or caffeinated foods.
- Choose soft foods or soak dry ones.
- Eat small servings frequently during the day.
- Eat your food warm (not hot) or cool (not cold) to prevent irritation.
- Drink liquids with your meals.
- Do not hesitate to ask to see the dietitian.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid tobacco.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE RECEIVING RADIATION THERAPY TO THE CHEST AREA

Examples of foods you should eat	Examples of foods to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soup (lukewarm, not hot)</li><li>• Yogurt</li><li>• Eggs</li><li>• Pudding</li><li>• Pasta</li><li>• Milk, milkshakes</li><li>• Apple, pear, peach juice</li><li>• Soft or canned fruits</li><li>• Cooked or puréed vegetables</li><li>• Meat in gravy, cut into little pieces</li><li>• Casseroles</li><li>• Hot or wet cereal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Toast, dry cereal</li><li>• Crackers, cookies, dry cakes</li><li>• Raw vegetables</li><li>• Popcorn, nuts, chips</li><li>• Fibrous or dry meat</li><li>• Citrus juice (orange, grapefruit, tangerine)</li><li>• Spicy food (pizza, chili)</li><li>• Coffee, dark pop (ex.: cola)</li></ul>

### Will I have a cough?

You may cough more than usual during radiation therapy. Your cough may be dry or full of secretions (mucus). You may even occasionally cough up spots of blood.

### What you can do if you have a cough:

- Drink lots of water. This may help to eliminate secretions.
- Try to sleep with your head raised.
- A cold air humidifier in your bedroom may help at night.
- Tell your care team if you cough up blood.



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- If the cough persists, tell your care team so that you can be prescribed drugs to reduce the cough.

The side effects described in this document are the most common. You may have other side effects not mentioned here.

Talk to your care team if you have symptoms.

### End of treatments

The staff will give you the date and time of the follow-up appointment with your radiation oncologist.

After your last treatment, some of your side effects will continue. They might even get worse before they get better. This is normal. Keep following the directions of your care team until you feel better.

Once your treatments are over, do not hesitate to call the Oncology Centre at **506-862-4005** if you have any questions or concerns.