

Radiation treatment to the brain at the WFCC

Your Primary Team at the Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC)

Radiation Oncology Doctor: _____

Radiation Oncology Nurse: _____

Radiation Oncology Team

You are seen by your Radiation Oncology Team once a week during treatments. They will ask you how you are doing with your treatments and discuss any concerns and side effects that you may have.

The radiation therapists help you prepare for treatments and are available every day to discuss any concerns that you may have.

Contacting your Primary Team

You can call your primary team anytime between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday. When you call in, you will be connected to your oncologist's secretary. She will take a message and have the doctor or nurse return your call.

For urgent problems after 4:00 pm or on the weekends, please do not call the WFCC. Call your family doctor or go directly to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre.

Important notice if you drive:

If you are receiving radiation therapy to the brain, It is not safe or legal for you to drive. Your Oncologist is required to send a letter to the Ministry of Transportation to suspend your license only while you are on treatment.

Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy is a cancer treatment that uses high energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells.

The 3 steps of radiation planning

Before radiation can start, you will need to come to the WFCC for radiation planning.

Step 1: Making a face mask

A face mask is made for you in the Mould Room. The purpose of this is to make sure that you are in the correct position during your treatments. It also helps keep you still during your radiation treatments.

Step 2: CT Simulation

CT simulation is a CT scan done for radiation planning. You wear your face mask for the CT scan. The radiation therapist takes several measurements and x-rays while you are lying on a special table.

Step 3: Receiving your radiation

Your radiation treatments are daily from Monday to Friday. Treatments are given in a specially designed treatment room. You wear your face mask for every treatment.

During the treatment you are alone in the treatment room, but the radiation therapists are able to see you and communicate with you through a TV monitor.

Radiation is similar to having an x-ray taken. It is painless, you cannot see or feel it. The actual treatment is only a few minutes, but getting into position and applying the face mask may take up to 15-20 minutes.

Side effects of radiation therapy

Radiation therapy is used to destroy cancer cells. However, some of your normal cells are also damaged during radiation. Some side effects are temporary and will lessen and go away in about 4 weeks after your radiation is done. Some side effects are permanent, and do not go away.

Early side effects

Early side effects that may occur during radiation treatment and can last for several weeks after treatment include:

- fatigue or tiredness
- nausea or feeling sick to your stomach
- headaches – radiation can cause the brain to swell. This swelling increases the pressure in the in brain which causes headaches. Tell your oncologist if you have severe headaches or if you wake up with a headache. You may need medicine such as a steroid pill to prevent headaches.
- hair loss which may be permanent
- seizures – you may need medication to prevent seizures
- dizziness
- skin changes to the scalp

Taking care of yourself during treatment

- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat a well balanced diet.
- Wash hair with baby shampoo and lukewarm water and gentle washing. Avoid friction to scalp.
- Only use lotions and moisturizers on your scalp that have been recommended by the health care staff.
- Protect your scalp when outdoors with a hat or scarf.
- Take medications as prescribed.
- Discuss side effects and concerns with your doctors, nurses and radiation therapists.

When to call us

Call us if you have:

- unexplained vomiting
- headaches that have changed
- temperature of 38°C or 101°F
- a seizure
- a decreased level of consciousness such as drowsiness or confusion
- changes in mood or behaviour
- new speech problems
- changes in vision such as seeing double or things are blurry
- changes in sensation or feeling

After treatment

Taking care of your skin. Continue with skin/scalp care until the skin reaction has settled down. Avoid use of hair dye and permanent waves for about one year after radiation.



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