

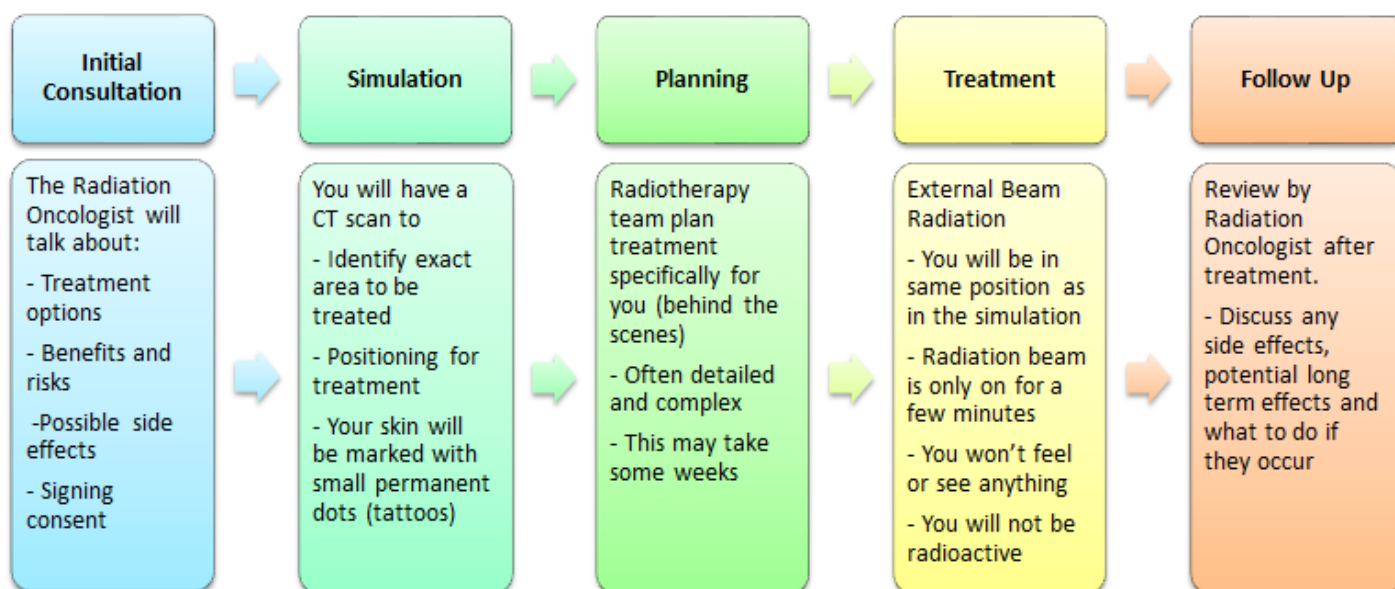
Information for Patients Radiotherapy for Breast Cancer

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

Radiotherapy is the use of high energy x-rays to treat cancer. It is given to destroy any remaining cancer cells after surgery or chemotherapy. Radiotherapy may also be given to reduce the size of cancer to make surgery possible or relieve symptoms like pain.

Your treatment is individualised and carefully planned by the Radiation Oncologist (Doctor). Treatments are usually daily 5 days a week (Monday to Friday) for 1 to 5 weeks. Allow up to half an hour for your visit.

When you are having radiotherapy, you will be on your own in the treatment room. The Radiation Therapists can see and hear you at all times via cameras just outside the room. The machine will not touch you during treatment and you won't feel anything. The machine will move around you and make a buzzing sound. If you become concerned or feel unwell in any way, raise your hand or call out. The Radiation Therapists will interrupt the treatment and help you.



Side Effects

Radiotherapy can cause side effects to the treatment area. They usually start gradually and may continue to get worse for a few weeks after treatment has finished. Most side effects improve 4-6 weeks after treatment. There is a small risk of long term or permanent side effects.

You will see your treatment team regularly to discuss and manage side effects. Help on managing side effects can be found on the next page.

Useful Resources

Breast Cancer Foundation

09 304 0766 - breastcancerfoundation.org.nz

Cancer Society

0800 226 237 - cancernz.org.nz

Pinc and Steel Rehabilitation after Cancer

pincandsteel.com

Tell your doctor or nurse about any side effects that are worrying you

We are here to help: Radiation Therapy Department 09 3074949 ext 22860 or 22837

Nurse Specialists - Jan 021 983 871, Linda 021 414 813, Manpreet 021 394 563, Rebecca 021 538 821

Email: BreastOnc@adhb.govt.nz



Skin Changes

Skin changes usually start to develop 2-3 weeks after the start of treatment and settle down 2-4 weeks after treatment has finished. In the area of treatment your skin may become red, warm, dry, itchy, more sensitive, darker than normal, or painful.

Please avoid....

- Rubbing the area
- Using sticky tape (such as Elastoplast or Micropore)
- Shaving
- Using wax, cream or lasers (for hair removal on or close to the treated area)
- Using makeup (perfumes)
- Sunblock, sun exposure and extreme hot/cold temperatures

Hygiene and Moisturising...

- Make sure the water isn't too hot; wash the skin gently with products you would normally use at home and gently pat dry.
- The nursing team will give you a moisturiser to use during your treatment however if you have a preferred one, please bring it in to show us. Fatty E or Cetomacrogol Cream applied thinly following treatment is soothing and keeps the area moisturised.
- Start moisturising from the first day of treatment and apply at least twice daily. This will continue for a few weeks after treatment as well.
- Do not apply moisturiser immediately before treatment
- You may go swimming if your skin is not blistered or peeling. It is best to shower immediately afterwards to wash of the chlorine or salt then apply moisturiser. Stop swimming if it irritates your skin. Please avoid hot tubs .
- You may use deodorant if you prefer but discontinue if it irritates your skin.
- Avoid clothing that may rub or irritate the area. Comfortable, loose, cotton clothing is ideal.

Itchy skin—Try salt water baths if your skin is itchy. Ask our team for clear instructions on this.

Fatigue

You may feel tired, have no energy, sleep a lot or not be able to do the things you usually enjoy. The amount of fatigue varies from person to person. Many patients are active throughout treatment.

- Pace your daily activities and rest when you need to.
- Eat a balanced diet including fresh fruit and vegetables, and reduce the amount of processed foods you eat as much as you can and drink plenty of fluids such as water, herbal teas and fruit juices.
- Exercising regularly is also a good way to reduce fatigue.
- Allow friends and family to help.
- Some patients regain their usual energy soon after treatment has finished. For others it may take longer.

Aches, Pains and some swelling can occur in the irradiated area. Take pain relief like paracetamol as needed.