



**Barwon
Health**



**BRAIN TREATMENT
INFORMATION BOOKLET**



Department of Radiation Oncology
Cancer Services, University Hospital Geelong

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Below: The Andrew Love Cancer Centre located at University Hospital Geelong (Swanston Street entrance). Open 8am - 5pm.



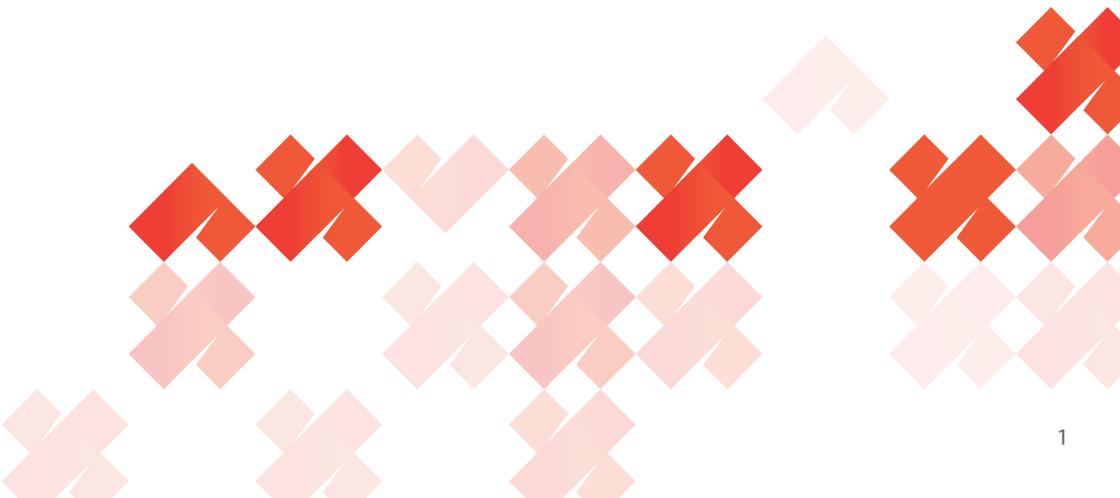
WHAT IS RADIOTHERAPY?

Radiotherapy is the use of radiation to destroy cancer cells. It works because cancer cells are more sensitive to radiation than normal cells. If a small dose of radiation is given each day over several weeks, normal cells recover from radiation but cancer cells cannot.

Radiotherapy is often given to patients who have cancers that arise in the brain (primary cancers) or have spread to the brain (metastases).

Radiotherapy can be used with the aim to cure a cancer or it may be given with the aim to relieve symptoms.

Radiotherapy can be used in conjunction with other types of treatment, such as surgery (pre or post-operative), chemotherapy or medications or a combination of all of these.



WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

During a consultation with your radiation oncologist (doctor) at the Andrew Love Cancer Centre (ALCC), your treatment options will be discussed and a decision made to proceed with treatment.

Before your radiotherapy treatment can begin the area to be treated needs to be defined. This occurs during a planning session. We will contact you by phone to advise you of the booking we have for your planning session.

At the planning session a radiation therapist will take a CT scan of the area indicated by your radiation oncologist to help plan your treatment. Measurements will also be recorded and a thermoplastic mask may be made to ensure stability during treatment. An MRI may be requested to assist in the planning process. We will advise you of these bookings.

Also at the planning session you will be given an appointment to begin your radiotherapy treatment. This will be written into an appointment booklet for you to take home. There are limited appointment times for the first treatment visit, so options may seem restricted however, your remaining appointment times will be discussed with you on your first treatment day and booked at times that best suit your needs depending on availability.

Following the planning session the radiotherapy nurse will meet with you to discuss skin care during treatment and to address any needs or concerns you may have regarding treatment.

On the day of your first treatment, please check in with your appointment card at our reception desk and take a seat in the waiting room.

A radiation therapist will meet with you and discuss the procedure about to take place before taking you through to the treatment area. Once in the treatment room, you will be placed in the same position as you were for the planning session and treatment will be delivered. You will be in the treatment room for up to 10-15 minutes each visit and the treatment may last for approximately 30 seconds to a minute from several different angles.

When you arrive each subsequent day for treatment, please hand your appointment booklet to the receptionists at the front desk and have a seat in the waiting room. You will then be invited through to the treatment area by one of the radiation therapists.

Whilst attending for a course of radiotherapy, a doctor will see you once each week in the treatment department. This will take place after your treatment. Nursing staff are also on hand to assist with any problems related to your treatment. The time spent in the centre may be as much as one hour each day depending on daily waiting times and your need to see a doctor or one of the nurses.

Below: The Linear Accelerator – used to deliver your treatment.





We encourage your family to watch your treatment, so they have an understanding of the daily activity.

WILL I FEEL ANYTHING?

You will feel no discomfort whilst treatment is taking place. The machine makes a noise but you feel and see nothing. Once you are positioned, the radiation therapists will leave the room and program the machine and computers.

Although you have to lie still, you can breathe normally during your radiation therapy. You will be monitored on closed circuit television and there are microphones for communication if necessary. We encourage your family to watch your treatment, so they have an understanding of the daily activity.

Note: you are not radioactive whilst having radiotherapy and it is safe to be near children and pregnant women.

HOW WILL IT AFFECT MY DAILY LIVING?

You may continue your usual work and activities, but you may experience some tiredness near the end of your course of treatment and in the weeks following.

WHAT SIDE-EFFECTS COULD OCCUR?

You may experience different degrees of these reactions, depending on the treatment site, the dose being given, the number of treatments, and your general health. Reactions will begin to occur within two to three weeks of treatment.

Skin reddening / irritation

Your skin and scalp in the treatment area may become slightly red two to three weeks into the treatment. This area may also become dry and tender. See page 7 for instructions on skin care.

Hair loss

Treatment to the head will cause the hair in the treatment area to fall out. This hair may grow back slowly depending on the dose. It may not be as thick as before treatment. Radiotherapy nursing staff can advise on options for head wear.

Pain and discomfort

You may experience mild headaches whilst on treatment. A nurse will give you information about pain control, and your doctor will provide prescriptions if required. It is important that you follow the pain control instructions while completing the radiation treatment.

Fatigue

You may become tired as you get towards the end of your treatment. This is a normal reaction to the radiotherapy and each person is affected in varying degrees. Finding a balance between rest and activity will help you cope with this side-effect.

Nausea

You may experience nausea whilst having treatment. If symptoms arise, please notify the radiotherapy nursing staff and they can assist in dealing with this side-effect.

WHAT SHOULD I DO FOR MY SKIN?

You may wash the treated skin with warm water and mild, unperfumed soap. Pat skin dry – do not rub.

- You may wash your hair with a mild unperfumed shampoo such as baby shampoo.
- Do not use cosmetics, perfumes or other lotions on the treated area once you begin radiotherapy. These products may contain metals that can increase the skin irritation caused by radiation.
- Avoid exposure of the treated skin to excessive temperatures including direct sunlight, heat packs, ice packs, electric blankets, saunas or hot spas during the course of your radiotherapy.
- Avoid manual shaving with a razor – electric shavers are best for skin care.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I wash the marks off of my skin?

We ask that you don't deliberately wash them off as this may irritate your skin. The radiation therapists will re-apply them each day as required if they wear off.

What happens after my treatment is finished?

Your follow up arrangements will be discussed and organised by your treating doctor prior to completing your treatment.

When do the side-effects settle?

The treatment keeps on working even though you have stopped coming in for treatment. Therefore you might find that symptoms get a little worse before they get better. Generally the side-effects will have settled within two to three weeks of finishing your treatment course.

REMEMBER

Experienced staff members are available to help you. The team in the radiotherapy unit consists of doctors, radiation therapists, nurse specialists, social workers, dieticians and pastoral care workers – they are here to help you resolve any concerns or problems you may have.

Please do not hesitate to ask for help. Contact details can be found on the back of this booklet.



PHONE CONTACTS

Radiotherapy Department Reception
03 4215 2600 (General Enquiries)

Radiotherapy Nurses' Desk
03 4215 2603

www.barwonhealth.org.au/cancer-services

