



**Barwon
Health**

PROSTATE 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 can be used with the aim to cure a cancer or with the aim to relieve symptoms caused by cancer. Radiotherapy may be used in conjunction with hormone therapy or surgery.



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. You will be contacted by phone to arrange this session.

On page 8 of this brochure, you will find instructions for you to follow prior to arrival in the department for planning and treatment. These involve bowel preparation through the use of suppositories and also bladder preparation. These steps will ensure you have consistent rectal and bladder volumes at each attendance. Please read the instructions carefully and ask the nursing staff if you have any questions.

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. You will then have tiny permanent marks placed on your skin. At the planning visit you will also be given an appointment time to commence your radiotherapy. 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.

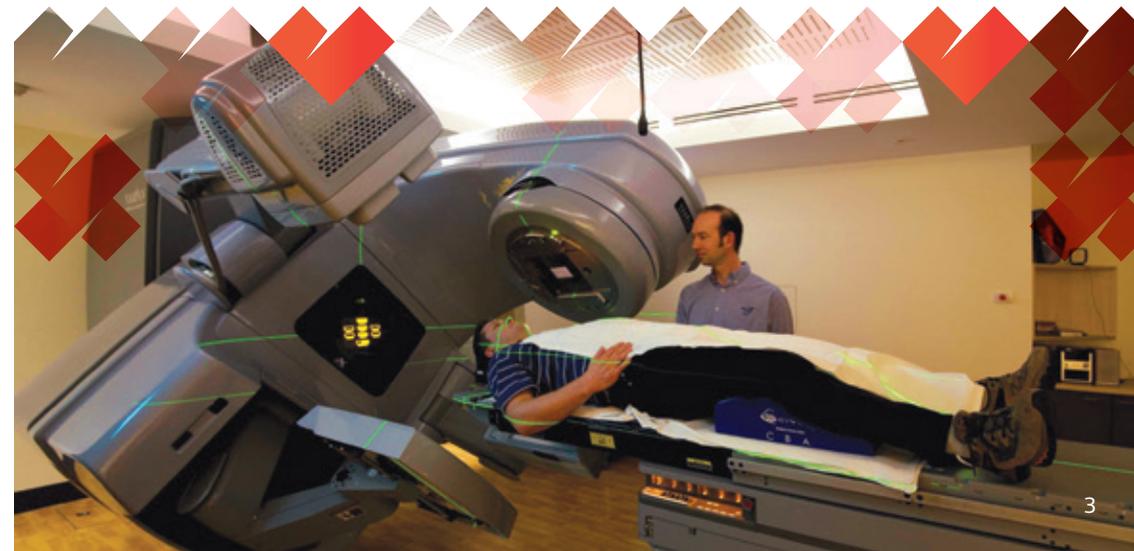
Following the planning session, the radiotherapy nurse will meet with you to discuss skin care during treatment and to address any needs or concerns you may have regarding treatment.

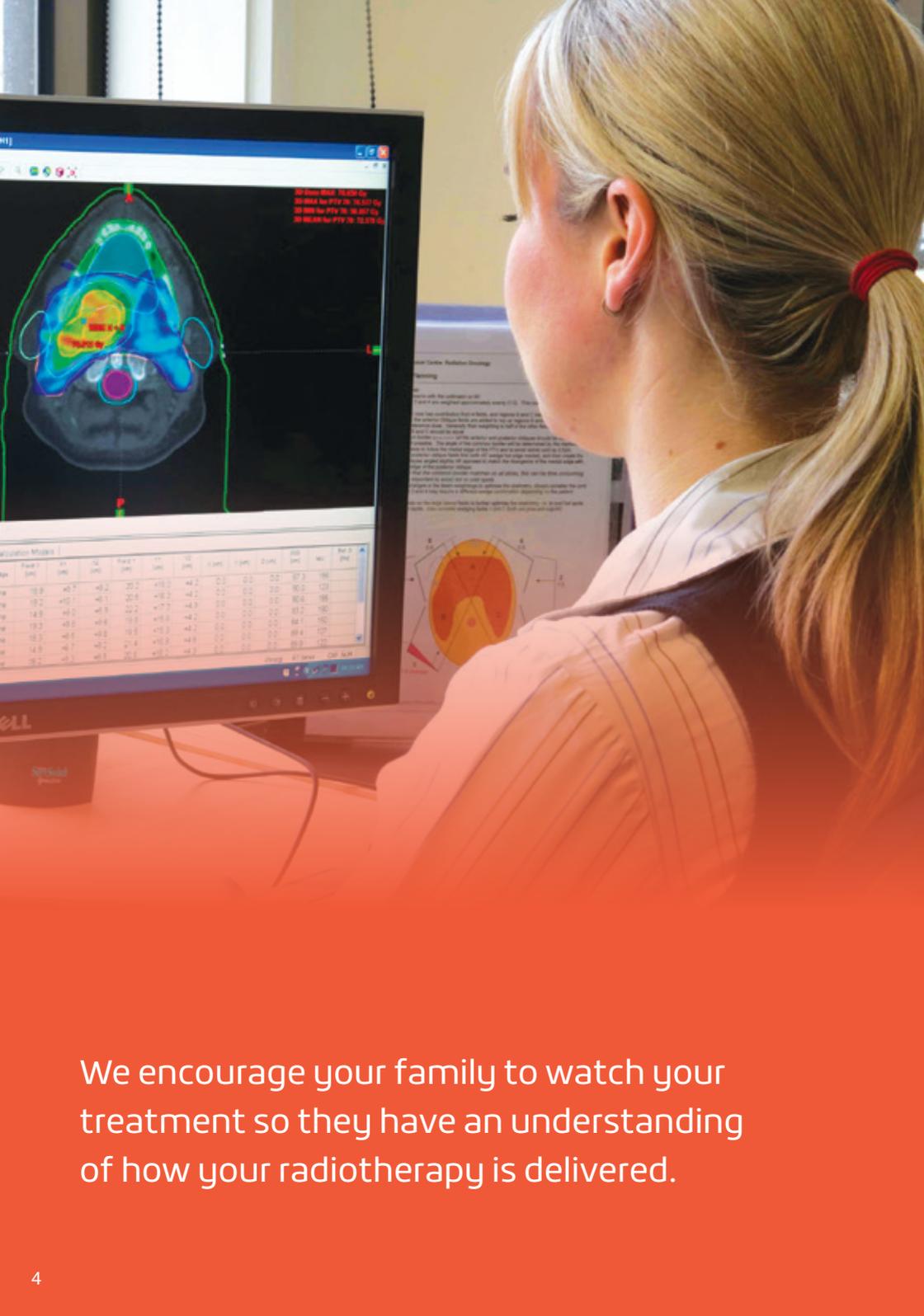
On the day of your first treatment, please report in with your appointment card to the reception desk and take a seat in the waiting room. A radiation therapist will meet with you and discuss the procedure about to take place prior to taking you to the treatment area. Once in the treatment room, you 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 from each of several different angles.

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

Whilst attending for a course of radiotherapy, a doctor will see you once each week in the treatment department. 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 how your radiotherapy is delivered.

WILL I FEEL ANYTHING?

You will feel no discomfort whilst treatment is taking place. The machine makes a noise but you will feel and see nothing. The radiation therapists will leave the room and you will be on your own while the machine and computers are programmed. You will be monitored on closed circuit television and there are microphones for communication if necessary. We encourage your family to watch your treatment from the console viewing area so there is better 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. We will try to arrange treatment visits to best suit your needs.

WHAT SIDE-EFFECTS COULD OCCUR?

You may experience different degrees of reactions, depending on the treatment site, the dose being given, the number of treatments, and your general health. Reactions will begin to occur within the second or third week of treatment.

Skin reddening and irritation

Slight reddening can occur by the second or third week of treatment especially in the region of the perineum (genital/anal regions). See page 7 for skin care instructions.

Fatigue

You may become increasingly tired as you progress through to 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.

Bowel Irritation / Tenesmus (including diarrhoea)

There may be an increase in how often you feel the need to use your bowels after two to three weeks of treatment. You may experience some discomfort if you strain and there may be some blood and mucus in the motions. Occasionally people develop the urge to have their bowels open without passing anything (tenesmus), whilst others may find opening their bowels painful. Report any diarrhoea to the nurses as the severity needs to be monitored and medication may be necessary.

These bowel changes are usually temporary and will correct themselves within a week or so of completion of treatment.

Bladder Irritation

Some symptoms of bladder inflammation/irritation are common. This may be burning of the urine (dysuria), increased urinary frequency and may even be associated with blood, particles, or mucus in the urine. Speak to the nurse or your doctor to discuss treatment options should these symptoms occur.

To relieve dysuria you may take an over-the-counter urinary alkaliser such as Ural or Uri calm in doses according to the directions on the pack. Please let the radiotherapy nurse know if you start to take this medication during your radiotherapy treatment.

WHAT SHOULD I DO FOR MY SKIN?

- A skin moisturiser will be given to you. You should use the moisturiser at least **TWICE DAILY** from the commencement of your treatment, then three to four times per day once your skin becomes pink.
- As the reaction deepens, you will need a different gel (Solugel) for skin care. The radiotherapy nurses will observe and advise you throughout your treatment.
- You may wash the treated skin with warm water and mild, unperfumed soap. Pat skin dry – do not rub.
- Avoid wearing tight fitting clothes. Loose cotton underwear is best.
- Do not use talcum powder.
- Avoid exposure of the treated skin to excessive temperatures including direct sunlight, heat packs and ice.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I wash the marks off of my skin?

We ask that you don't deliberately wash them off as this may further 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.

BOWEL AND BLADDER PREPARATION FOR PROSTATE RADIATION TREATMENT

Radiation causes some side effects to the bladder and bowel (rectum). To help reduce these side effects we recommend you have your bladder full and rectum empty for the CT scan and for every time you come in for treatment. Follow the instructions below for each attendance, planning or treatment, to prepare your bowel and bladder appropriately.

Bowel Preparation

As of today, introduce a fibre supplement to your diet. You are encouraged to continue this until directed otherwise.

- Fibre supplements, such as Fybogel, Fibyrax and Metamucil are available at most supermarkets or pharmacies.
- Take one heaped teaspoon with a glass of water daily to assist with maintaining regular bowel function.

You will be given some suppositories when you see the Radiation Oncologist in the department.

Use the suppository 1.5 hours **before every radiotherapy appointment (planning or treatment)**. Alternatively if you have to travel for longer than 40 minutes to reach the hospital, it is recommended that you arrive 1.5 hours before your appointment to use the suppository (or at 8am for a 9am appointment).

During the course of treatment your bowels may become more active; if this happens please speak with the nursing staff.

Bladder Preparation

The following instructions will ensure your bladder is consistently filled for each planning or treatment visit.

- Planning appointment: When you arrive in the ALCC, a radiation therapist will instruct you when to empty your bladder and drink two white plastic cups of cool water (this will be 30 minutes prior to your CT appointment).
- Treatment appointments: Arrive in the ALCC earlier than your appointment time to empty your bladder and drink two white plastic cups of cool water (approx 300mls) 30 minutes before your treatment appointment.

We suggest you practice keeping your bladder full a couple of times before your first appointment with us.

Please do not hesitate to ask a radiation therapist or nurse if you have any queries with this process.

For general good health and during radiotherapy treatment:

Ensure you are well hydrated by drinking at least eight glasses of water each day.

REMEMBER

Experienced staff members are available to help you. The team in the radiotherapy unit consists of doctors, nurse specialists, radiation therapists, 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.

PHONE CONTACTS

Radiotherapy Department Reception
03 4215 2600 (General Enquiries)

Radiotherapy Nurses' Desk
03 4215 2603

Cancer Patient Information Centre Barwon Health
03 5226 7676

www.barwonhealth.org.au

