

Superficial Radiotherapy

ANDREW LOVE CANCER CENTRE



What is Superficial Radiotherapy?

Superficial Radiotherapy or S.X.R.T is used for the treatment of a significant number of skin cancers. It involves the use of low energy x-rays in a focused beam on the area to be treated.

This beam energy penetrates only the top surface layer of the skin.

Therefore, treatment avoids the deeper tissues which reduces scarring. This is particularly important when treating regions around and near the face.



Superficial Radiotherapy has a cure rate equal to surgery for small cancers. It is often the treatment of choice when surgery is difficult or not suitable because of other medical conditions.

What is the process?

During the consultation with your Radiation Oncologist (doctor) at the Andrew Love Cancer Centre, your treatment will be discussed and a decision will be made on the size of the area to be treated and the dose to be given. This information is provided to the Radiation Therapists who will see you on the first day of treatment.

On the day of your first treatment, please go to the reception desk with your appointment card and take a seat in the

waiting room. A Radiation Therapist will take you through to the treatment area and discuss with you the procedure about to take place.

At your first treatment appointment, Radiation Therapists will then take measurements and photos, determine what shielding is required and calculate the time needed to deliver your prescribed dose.

Shielding refers to protection of skin and other tissues close to the treatment area. Shielding is customized for each patient. The time calculated refers to how long the machine needs to be on to deliver your dose and it is generally only for one or two minutes. You will not feel or see anything. This initial attendance is the longest session you will have. Each subsequent treatment will only involve putting on the shielding and receiving the treatment.

How often?

Your Radiation Oncologist will prescribe a recommended dose and this dose will be broken down into a number of days (fractions). By treating in fractions, the cancerous cells will eventually accumulate a level of radiation damage from which they cannot recover whilst limiting the harm to surrounding healthy cells.

What to expect during the treatment?

The Radiation Therapists will leave the room and program the computers. The machine makes a noise but you will feel



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and see nothing. You will feel nothing when the treatment is being delivered. You will be monitored on Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) and there are microphones for communication with our staff if necessary.

NOTE: You are not radioactive during or after treatment. Just like having a chest x-ray, when it is finished, it is safe to be near children and pregnant women.

What side-effects could occur?

At first, you may notice some reddening of the area being treated. Approximately ten days into the treatment this redness may become more persistent. The treatment area may begin to develop some crusting or weeping during this time.

Skin care instructions will be given to you by the Radiotherapy Nurses. Unperfumed soap may be used on the area and cream will be provided for you to apply. It is important not to aggravate the area by touching or scratching and always ask if unsure.



The radiation accumulates in the cells and ultimately leads to a level that will destroy the skin cancer cells. This means that the radiation will continue to work after you have completed your treatment course.

Your skin may become more red even after the treatment is finished. The crusting and

weeping of the treated area will eventually stop and will reveal new skin beneath. By the time you are ready for your post treatment review, the area should be healed.

How to look after the treated area

Care of the treated area is simple but please note it is very important to use only the recommended products on the therapy site.

- A skin moisturiser will be given to you. Use at least twice daily from the commencement of your treatment and then three or four times daily once your skin becomes pink.
- You may wash the treated skin with warm water and mild, unperfumed soap. Pat dry – do not rub.
- Do not use cosmetics or perfumes or other lotions on the treated area once you commence Radiation Therapy. These products may contain metal components 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.
- In the long term, you must be careful to avoid further sun exposure.

Contact

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