

## Radiation Before, During, and After

A patient planning worksheet



Remember that every person's lung cancer and treatment plan can vary. Consult with your doctor about your treatment plan and what you might expect.

### What to expect **before** treatment

Your first radiation therapy session is called a simulation. This usually does not involve an actual treatment. During this visit, your radiation therapy team will position your body and use imaging scans to help direct the radiation beam to target the tumor.

The tumor's location may be marked on your skin with a small dot like a temporary tattoo to help the radiation therapist aim the beam precisely during treatment. The radiation therapist may recommend using an immobilizer to help you stay in exactly the same position during each radiation treatment.

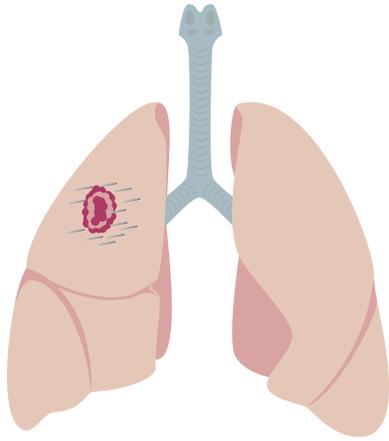
After the simulation, your radiation therapy team will review your information and design a treatment plan. It is important to make sure you understand your insurance coverage, and any copay amounts that will be required. This is also a good time to talk with your doctor about a plan for managing any side effects you might experience. This type of care is sometimes called palliative, or supportive care, because it is focused on helping ease possible side effects of lung cancer.

### What to expect **during** treatment

Radiation is intended to damage cancer cells through electromagnetic waves. Radiation is designed to affect only the part of the body being treated. There are two main types of radiation used to treat lung cancer: external beam radiation and internal radiation therapy.



External Beam Radiation Machine



Internal radiation seeds placed near

### Questions for your care team:

- What side effects might I experience and what can I do to relieve them?
- Should I eat a special diet during treatment?
- Is there anything I should avoid after treatment?
- Who do I contact if I have any questions?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### List your own questions here:

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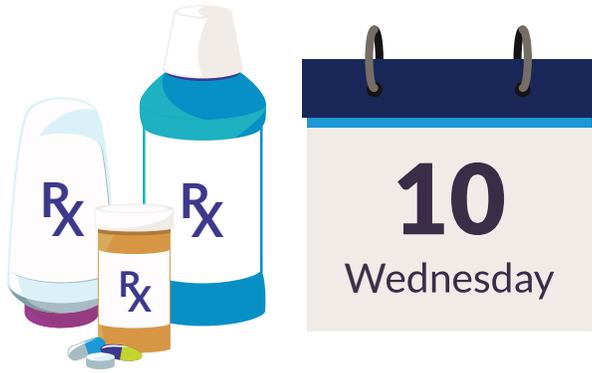
**External-beam radiation** uses a machine that directs high-energy rays from outside the body into the tumor. Treatments are usually short and painless and typically given about 5 times a week. As with any cancer treatment, individual experiences may vary. The total dose of radiation and the number of treatments given is based on factors like your type of cancer, the goals of your treatment and your general health.

With **internal radiation therapy**, also known as brachytherapy, radioactive seeds or sources are placed in or near the tumor. This gives a high radiation dose to the tumor while reducing exposure to the healthy tissues around it. This type of radiation sometimes requires a brief hospital stay and you may need to limit contact with others for a short time after treatment. Some patients may experience nausea or weakness during the procedure, but most patients feel little to no discomfort.

Sometimes lung cancer spreads to the brain, also known as brain metastasis. Brain metastases (brain mets) are treated with stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS). SRS works the same way as radiation to other parts of the body. It is very precise and used to kill cancer cells in the brain and spine. In most cases, only the diseased parts of the brain receive SRS. Because small cell lung cancer (SCLC) patients are at a higher risk of brain metastasis, some SCLC patients may receive whole brain radiation therapy (WBRT) to prevent against brain metastasis.

Here are some tips to consider during your radiation treatment:

- Your body uses a lot of energy to heal during radiation. Ask your doctor or nurse if you need a special diet during treatment. It might also be helpful to speak with a dietitian.
- Get plenty of rest. Lean on your support system of family and friends for help.



### Contact information in case of questions or emergency:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## What to expect after treatment

Like with any cancer treatment, you may experience side effects.

- Radiation may cause skin changes like dryness, itching or blistering. Your doctor may prescribe topical medication, like a special lotion, to help with your symptoms. Your doctor may also recommend other ways to protect your skin, like staying out of the sun.
- Radiation to the chest may cause a cough, problems breathing or shortness of breath. These usually improve after treatment ends, although sometimes they may continue.
- You may have a sore throat or trouble swallowing during treatment. This might make it hard to eat anything other than soft foods or liquids for a while. Your doctor may be able to prescribe medication that can help relieve this discomfort or have you do exercises to help with swallowing.

Most side effects may improve within a few months, but the same or other side effects may continue or emerge over time after radiation therapy ends. Everyone is different, so talk to your doctor or nurse about possible late side effects and what signs to look for.

Once you have finished radiation therapy, you will likely need checkups with a clinician. At first, these may happen every few months and then may continue less frequently. During these checkups, your clinician will see how well radiation has worked, check for other signs of cancer, look for late side effects, and talk to you about your treatment and care.

For more information please visit [Lung.org/lungcancer](https://Lung.org/lungcancer) or call Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNGUSA