

Radiation treatment

The key question to ask is, “What proof is there that the treatment being offered will cure, extend actual survival, or increase the quality of life?” Ask to see scientific papers and reports on the treatment. If necessary, seek professional help in interpreting this information.

Radiation treatment

1. Why are you recommending I have Radiation Treatment?
2. Is radiation to be used as a cure or symptom relief? (A lot less radiation is needed for symptom relief).
3. How will this treatment change the cancer environment: will it only kill some of the cancer cells and leave me vulnerable when the cancer stem cells go on to create more cancer?
4. Are there active cancer cells in the area, or is the radiotherapy a precautionary measure?
5. How will it help me?
6. Will a planning CT (CAT scan) be required to determine the area to be treated?
7. Will I require more than one of these scans which inherently subject me to even more radiation?
8. What would you consider to be a successful outcome at the end of the treatment?
For example
 - a) no tumour remaining?
 - b) a reduction in tumour size? or,
 - c) another outcome?
9. What is the success rate for this treatment?
10. How often have you personally treated my type of tumour, and what is your success rate?
11. Define success rate and how does it compare to the national average?
11. Will Radiation therapy be my only treatment?
12. What are the benefits and risks of Radiation therapy?
13. What other organs and tissues will receive radiation as well as the target area?
14. Will the beam be modulated in any way to minimise damage?
15. What are the chances of it causing long-term damage to surrounding organs and/or bones?
16. What is likely to happen if I don't have these treatments?
17. What is the name of the treatment I will have?
18. Is this the optimum time for this treatment, or would it be better to hold it in reserve?
19. How will radiation affect my risk of distant relapse, which has a much higher rate of recurrence (30%) than the 10-15 percent of patients with stage I or II who will develop a local recurrence? In light of the risk of the radiation creating more cancer, how will this radiation treatment benefit me?
20. Which supplements are recommend to:
 - improve the success of the radiotherapy?
 - reduce side effects?
 - speed up recovery?

Other Treatments

21. Is there an alternative therapy that has proven effective in treating my type of cancer?
22. What would be the “down-side” of trying an alternative therapy before starting any Radiation therapy?
23. Where can I find more information about alternative therapies?

Undergoing Radiation

24. What kind of Radiation will I undergo?
25. Who will be responsible for my radiation treatment?
26. Will I need to go to hospital to have this treatment?
27. If yes, how many days will I have to spend in the hospital?
28. How will the radiation be given?
29. How many sessions will there be?
30. Who will give it to me?
31. How often will it be given?
32. Over what period of time?
33. How much radiation will I be taking at one time?
34. How long will each treatment take to administer?
35. What parts of my body will be targeted?
36. What will this treatment do to my body?
37. Will I feel pain or discomfort during the treatment?
38. Can I go home immediately afterwards?
39. Will Radiation affect my usual activities? If so, for how long?
40. What lifestyle changes will I need to make to improve the outcome of the radiation treatment and protect my body during treatments?
41. Will I need to take time off work or adjust my work schedule?
42. Will I need help with daily activities during treatment?
43. Are there special instructions to follow while I'm having Radiation or after the treatment is finished?
44. When I am taking Radiation, can I eat all kinds of foods and drink alcohol??
45. How will you protect my heart and other organs from the radiation?
46. What type of activities should I avoid while on this treatment?
47. Will the treatment make me prone to infections?
48. How will you support my immune system during treatment?
49. What special attention do I need to pay to the area of my body that is being treated?
50. What happens if there is no response?
51. How common is that and what is the fallback plan?

Following Radiation

52. Will I have pain or discomfort after treatment?
53. How long will it last?
54. How can it be managed?
55. Do I need to put something special on my skin if I get "burned" by the treatments?
56. What are the possible side-effects?
57. When would they start?
58. How are they usually managed?
59. Are there any side-effects that I should report right away?
60. Who do I call?
61. What symptoms – swelling, fever, nausea and so on – might indicate a problem?
62. Is there anything I can do to lessen the side effects?
63. Can the cancer spread, even though I am on Radiation?
64. Will I gain or lose weight?
65. Will I lose my hair?
66. If so, how soon?
67. Will I be nauseous?
68. Will I be exhausted?

69. Will I get mouth sores?
70. What type of activities should I avoid?
71. For how long?
72. What kinds of feelings (such as sadness, anger, vulnerability, loss of control) am I likely to have after treatment?
73. Where can I find help coping with my feelings if I need it?

Long Term

74. Are there any possible long-term effects?
75. What are they and how are they usually managed?
76. Are there any special exercises I can do to help my recovery?
77. Will I need physiotherapy?
78. How long will it take for the treated area to heal?
79. Will I need help at home?
80. Will I be able to work?
81. What do I need to know about taking care of my skin during treatment?
82. Is it ok to use perfume, deodorants or lotions?
83. Will this treatment affect my sex life?
84. When will I know if the treatment was successful?
85. What are the chances of the cancer returning?
86. What follow-up tests do I need, and how often will I need them?
87. Where can I get more detailed information about this kind of treatment?

Complementary therapy.

88. Would complementary therapies help me?
89. Is there one in particular you would suggest?
90. Is this therapy available locally?
91. What are the known risks and benefits in using this therapy?
92. When would it be safe for me to use this therapy with my conventional treatment?
93. What is a safe amount of this therapy?
94. Will you help me track both the benefits and side effects of the therapy?
95. Do you have any suggestions about other complementary therapies that could be helpful for my type of cancer?
96. Would I benefit from Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy
97. Where can I find more information about complementary therapy?

Family concerns

98. How does a partner or spouse usually react?
99. What can we do to help each other?
100. How can I talk about the changes in my body with my partner?
101. How do I talk to my friends and family about cancer and my treatment?
102. How do family and friends usually react?
103. What support is available for my family members?
104. Where can I get more detailed information?

FERTILITY concerns

105. Will the treatment affect my ability to have children?
106. Is there another treatment that might preserve my ability to have children without reducing my chance of long-term survival?

107. What's the risk of congenital abnormality (birth defects) in any children conceived after my treatment ends?
108. Will you refer me to a fertility specialist to discuss my options before starting my treatment?
109. Will preserving my fertility delay my treatment?

For Women:

110. Is there anything you can do to protect my ovaries from exposure to radiation (ie, surgical relocation)?
111. Will you do a pregnancy test before starting treatment to make certain I am not pregnant now?
112. If I am pregnant, how will this affect my treatment?
113. Is it possible to harvest eggs, fertilize them, and store them as embryos before starting treatment?
114. Can I still conceive a child when I am getting cancer treatment?
115. Should my partner and I use birth control measures during treatment?
116. What kind would you recommend or advise against ...and why?
117. What are the risks to me and to my child should I become pregnant during treatment ?
118. Will the treatment induce menopause?
119. Will the menopause last only a short while or will it be permanent?
120. Should my partner and I use birth control measures after treatment is over?
121. For how long? ...and why?
122. If I am able to conceive a child after my treatment is over, will there be any risk to my health?
123. Once my treatment is over, how long would I have to wait before trying to get pregnant?

For Men:

124. Is there anything you can do to protect my testicles from exposure to radiation?
125. Is it possible to bank my sperm before starting treatment?
126. While I am in treatment, will I still produce sperm?
127. Is it necessary for me to use condoms during sexual activity?
128. Will I still be able to father children after treatment is finished?

Other questions you may have.

You are the most important member of your healthcare team. Your situation is unique, and your treatment should be developed just for you. You can participate in your care by doing the following:

Be involved in decisions that affect you.

Learn about your cancer and all available treatment options.

Go to all your doctor, clinic and hospital appointments.

Ask your team how to contact them between appointments if you have any questions that need answers quickly.

Talk to your team about your worries or concerns.



[Cancer Ireland](http://www.cancerireland.ie)