

RADIATION



About Prostate Cancer®

WHAT IS RADIATION THERAPY FOR PROSTATE CANCER?

Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to kill prostate cancer cells. Radiation treatment is given either externally (outside the body) or internally (inside the body). Treatment type depends on the type of prostate cancer, overall health, stage and grade of cancer, life expectancy, and personal choice.

IS RADIATION THERAPY A GOOD CHOICE FOR ME?

Radiation therapy can be a good choice for:

- Men whose prostate cancer is only in their prostate
- Men whose prostate cancer has penetrated to organs and tissue near the prostate and who are using hormone therapy
- Men whose prostate cancer has recurred (returned after treatment)
- Men with advanced prostate cancer, to reduce symptoms caused by their tumor

WHAT IS EXTERNAL BEAM RADIATION THERAPY?

External beam radiation therapy (EBRT) sends a targeted beam of radiation to the prostate. Before the first treatment, your medical team will take detailed images of your prostate. This will help them to know how much radiation is needed and where to target it. Your medical team will work to limit the radiation to organs and tissues not affected by the cancer. This also helps reduce common side effects such as bowel and bladder problems and sexual dysfunction.

The benefit of EBRT is it does not require any surgery or anesthesia. Each radiation treatment lasts only a few minutes. It is done once a day, five days a week for seven to eight weeks. However, you may not see any side effects until several weeks or months after treatment.

WHAT IS INTERNAL RADIATION THERAPY?

Internal radiation therapy is also known as brachytherapy. With brachytherapy, radioactive material is placed into the prostate using needles or a catheter. There are two types of brachytherapy: low dose rate (LDR) brachytherapy and high dose rate (HDR) brachytherapy.

In LDR brachytherapy, a doctor uses a needle to insert radioactive “seeds” about the size of a rice grain into the prostate. These seeds send out radiation, killing the prostate cancer cells nearby. In LDR the seeds are left in the prostate even after treatment is finished.

In HDR brachytherapy, your doctor will insert radiation into your prostate using a catheter. This catheter may remain in your body until treatment is complete. But the radiation source is only inserted in your prostate temporarily. Once your treatment is finished, all radioactive material is removed.

Surgery and anesthesia are required for both LDR and HDR brachytherapy. In addition, some men may need to stay in the hospital overnight to complete their treatment. The most common side effect of brachytherapy is blood in the urine after treatment. That should last only a few weeks. One side effect of LDR brachytherapy is that the seeds may continue to give off radiation after surgery. Men who have brachytherapy may have bowel and bladder problems. Urinary problems other than incontinence also occur, but not in most men. Some men also have sexual dysfunction problems, which can occur a few weeks to months after treatment.

Choosing the right treatment for prostate cancer is a personal decision. You should make your decision with the help and support of your doctor and family. No treatment option is perfect for every man. Whatever choice you make, it should be the right one for you and your life.

