

Prostate Cancer: Radiation therapy treatment

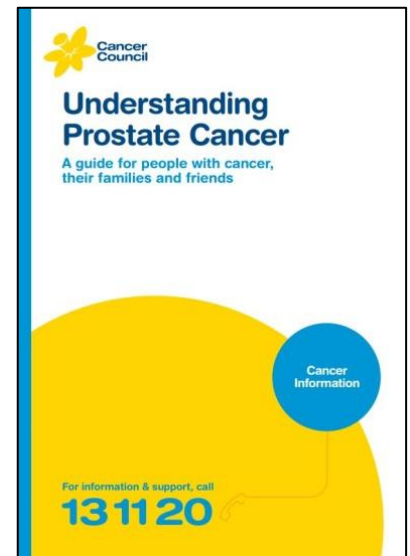
**Information for patients,
families and friends**

About this booklet

This booklet is designed to give you information about radiation therapy treatment for prostate cancer and what to expect.

If you have any questions please speak to your Radiation Oncologist or the other helpful staff at Alfred Health Radiation Oncology during your next visit.

The Cancer Council of Victoria produces an easy to read prostate cancer information booklet. Copies of the booklet can be found at Alfred Health Radiation Oncology or go to their website www.cancervic.org.au.



Why use radiation therapy to treat prostate cancer?

Radiation therapy has been used to treat prostate cancer for more than 50 years. Technology has developed incredibly over this time leading to high rates of cancer control and cure, comparable to that of surgery. Many men prefer the convenience of having treatment as an outpatient, compared with major surgery, while others may have medical problems that make surgery a bad choice.

Radiation therapy is usually given as part of a combination of treatments for prostate cancer, including hormone treatment, radiation therapy and surgery.

Side effects

Below is a list of the most common side effects associated with radiation therapy to the prostate. Side effects may not be limited to the following, so if you have any concerns please speak to your Radiation Oncologist.

Side effects can be divided into two groups:

- Acute – Those which happen during treatment.
- Late – Those which happen after treatment is completed.

Acute side effects

Tiredness

Most people experience tiredness during radiation therapy treatment. This is usually mild and begins 2-3 weeks after treatment starts and continues 2-6 weeks after treatment is finished.

This is not normally debilitating and in itself should not affect your daily activities or ability to drive. However, you may wish to go to bed earlier or take a rest during the afternoon. We strongly encourage you to continue your regular activities like walking or light exercises.

Urinary

Passing urine may be uncomfortable 2-3 weeks after treatment starts. The urine flow may be slower than normal and you may need to pass urine more frequently.

Bowel

Some people experience irritation of the bowel which includes needing to pass bowel motions more frequently and urgently, wind and discomfort. There may also be some bleeding. If you are experiencing significant bowel upset please discuss this with your Radiation Oncologist or nurse. You may need to change your diet and be referred to a dietician.

Sexual

Sexual intercourse can be affected and some men experience discomfort on ejaculation.

Late side effects

Urinary

Urinary symptoms are uncommon but include:

- Strictures – Narrowing of the urethra.
- Leaking of urine.

Bowel

About a quarter of all men notice a permanent alteration in bowel habit after radiation therapy. In less than 2% of men these symptoms are severe enough to require treatment. Symptoms include:

- Urgency.
- Using your bowels more frequently.
- Bleeding.

Sexual

There may be a period after the radiation therapy when you are temporarily impotent. It is thought in general terms, that of men who are fully potent prior to treatment, 60-70% will regain and maintain this. The radiation may also stop you from producing sperm, making you sterile.

Another cancer

It is known that radiation exposure may cause another cancer many years after treatment. This risk is very small (about 1 in 1000-10000) and is heavily out-weighed by the potential benefit of the treatment to you. If you have any questions or concerns about this please discuss with your Radiation Oncologist.

Alfred Health

Radiation Oncology
55 Commercial Road
Melbourne VIC 3004
T 03 9076 2337
F 03 9076 3465

alfredhealth.org.au

Further information:

The Alfred

alfredhealth.org.au

Alfred Health Radiation Oncology

alfredhealth.ro

Latrobe Regional Hospital

lrh.com.au

Cancer Council Victoria

cancervic.org.au

If you would like to provide feedback or request a copy of this information in a different format, contact us at patient.information@alfred.org.au



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