

After Your Breast Cancer Consultation in Radiation Oncology

At this point, you feel overwhelmed, scared, confused, and a wide range of other emotions. We hope that your visit helped relieve some of those fears. You will next need to decide which type of breast radiation treatment is right for you.

Radiation Therapy

Radiation kills any of the cancer cells that remain after surgery. This lowers your risk of breast cancer coming back. Below are the two methods of radiation we use to treat breast cancer. These methods are equally effective for women with certain types of early stage breast cancer and ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).

	How it is given	Treatment Schedule	Side Effects	Benefits
External Beam Radiation	High intensity x-rays are directed at the whole breast.	Once a day (15 minute sessions) for 3 to 6 weeks.	Skin reaction (like a sunburn), breast swelling and discomfort. Fatigue.	Less invasive. Used for many years.
Breast Brachytherapy	Catheter(s) are placed into the breast at the site where the tumor was. Treatment is given with a radioactive seed that travels into the catheter(s) for a short time.	Twice a day (45 – 60 minute sessions) for 5 days.	Breast discomfort from the catheter(s). Minimal skin reaction. Fatigue.	Radiation is given closer to the cancer, sparing healthy tissue. Faster recovery.

Women who will receive any type of breast radiation require a CT scan. This CT scan tells us more about the size and shape of your breast and surgical site. It can help us figure out the best treatment option for you. If breast brachytherapy is an option for you, the CT scan shows us which type of catheter would be best. If you will be having external beam radiation therapy, the CT scan shows us which type of machine (linear accelerator) would be best.

A CT scan is a type of x-ray. We use a CT scan done in Radiation Oncology to plan your treatment. This type of CT is looked at only by persons within the department. This type of scan is not used to diagnose disease. Some women also receive an MRI scan in Radiation Oncology to help plan their radiation.

Before the Scan

If you are pregnant, or think you might be pregnant, tell us before the scan is done. Your doctor will order a urine pregnancy test if you are of childbearing age (10-55 years of age) or have not gone through menopause.

Let us know if it is hard for you to be confined in spaces. We can give you medicine to help you relax. If you take this type of medicine for the scan, you will need someone to drive you home. You should not drive or use dangerous equipment for 24 hours.

You may eat and drink liquids up until the scan. You will not have an IV placed or receive any type of contrast.

We will ask you to remove some of your clothing for the scan. For women who are having a CT scan, this includes clothing that covers the upper body (i.e. shirt and bra). We will give you a hospital gown, robe, towel, and/or blanket to use.

We will take a photo of your face for your chart.

During the Scan

You will lie on a narrow table. The table will move in and out of the opening of the scanner. It takes about 30 minutes to complete the scan. A lot of this time is used for getting you into the right position.

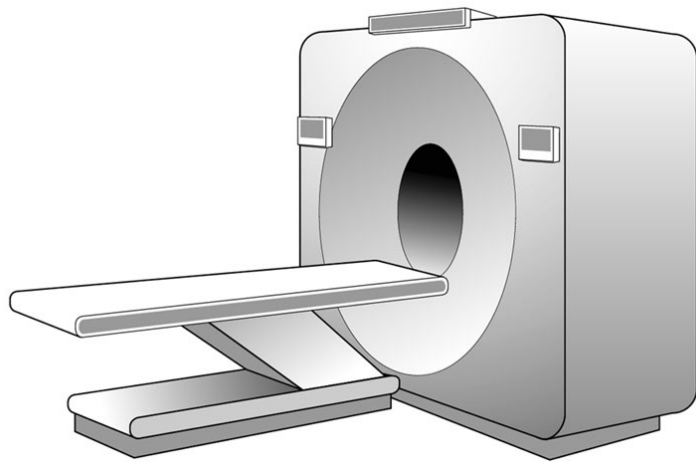
The scan itself takes only a few minutes. During the scan, you will be alone in the room. We will be able to see you through a window. We will be able to hear you through a speaker. You will need to hold still during the scan. Most often you will be on your back for the scan.

Sometimes we ask you to lie on your stomach (called “prone” breast radiation). We may ask you to have your arms resting above your head. We may also ask you to “take a deep breath and hold” during part of the scan. In most cases there is no pain or discomfort during the scan. If you need something, or have any problems during the scan, just speak up as we will be listening for any concerns.

The radiation therapist will make temporary ink marks or permanent tattoos on your skin. Please do not remove any marks at home, unless we tell you that you may do so.

Women who will receive breast brachytherapy do not need tattoos, so the temporary ink marks can be washed off after your visit. Women who will receive external beam radiotherapy may have 4 small tattoos done at the CT visit. These tattoos look like tiny black freckles.

Radiation tattoos are permanent. We use them because they work better than temporary skin marks to get you in the correct position for external beam treatment each day. Please tell your doctor or radiation therapist if you have questions or concerns about tattoos.



After the Scan

External Beam Radiation – After the CT scan, we will start working on your radiation plan. A radiation therapist will call you within the next few days to schedule your first treatment visit.

Breast Brachytherapy – After the CT scan, you will meet with your doctor to figure out if breast brachytherapy is an option for you. You will also meet with a nurse who will teach you about the procedure. We will schedule your catheter placement and treatments.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Radiation Oncology at **(608) 263-8500** between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©7/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6284.