

## Common Questions About Tomo-Therapy®

Radiation therapy can be overwhelming. This handout has a list of questions patients have asked in the past. We hope this will help guide you through your treatment.

### **When will I get the results of my CT scan?**

The CT scan you had today was for treatment planning only. Doctors will not be able to use this scan to see changes in your tumor.

### **When is my first radiation therapy treatment appointment?**

Your treatment plan will be made after your CT scan. The radiation therapist will call you in 1-2 weeks to set up your first treatment. They will try to work around your schedule.

### **Where will my treatment be?**

The therapist tells you which machine will be used for your treatment. You will get directions to that machine.

### **Where do I check-in?**

Come straight down to Radiation Oncology. Check in at the desk right off the K elevator in the basement. You do **not** need to check-in at the main registration desk.

### **When will I see my doctor or nurse?**

Your doctor and nurse will see you on a regular basis during treatment. They will follow your progress and check for side effects. Tell them about any concerns you have. You will see your doctor once a week.

### **Can I feel the radiation?**

You will not feel the radiation. You can hear the machine turn on and you may hear a buzzing sound.

### **Who is on my treatment team?**

- **Radiation therapists** work with doctors to give the daily treatment. They are under the doctor's prescription and supervision. They keep daily records. They check the treatment machines to make sure they are working properly.
- **Medical physicists** work with your doctor to make your treatment plan. They also work with the dosimetrist to make sure treatments are right for you.
- **Dosimetrists** calculate the dose of radiation. This ensures the tumor gets the right amount of radiation. They use computers to create the treatment plan.

### **Will radiation make me sick?**

You may have side effects from your radiation treatment. The side effects are based on the area of your body treated. For example, patients being treated to their abdomen or pelvis may feel nauseous. Feeling tired during radiation treatment is common. Skin reactions from the radiation are also common. Side effect information is in the folder given to you at your consult visit. Ask the radiation therapist or doctor if you have questions.

### **Will I lose my hair?**

Treatment to the head can cause hair loss. Treatment to any part of the body covered with hair can cause hair loss in that area only. Hair loss can be permanent or temporary. This depends on your radiation dose.

**When will I see side effects from the radiation?**

Side effects start about 2 weeks after the start of your treatment. Ask the radiation therapist or doctor if you have questions.

**Will I be radioactive?**

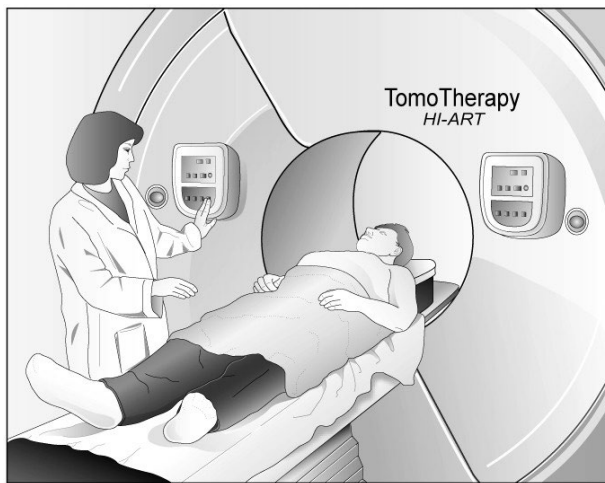
No. The only time there is radiation is when the machine is turned on. You are safe to be around others. You will not give off radiation.

**What happens if I can't make it to one of my radiation therapy treatments?**

Call your treatment machine phone number to speak with a therapist. Try not to miss any of your treatments. You will need to make up for a missed day. Another day would be added on to your treatment schedule.

**What is Tomo-Therapy®?**

It is a radiation treatment method using a machine similar to a CT scan. The Tomo-Therapy® machine is a treatment machine and a CT scanner. The daily CT confirms the size, shape, and location of your tumor before the treatment.



**What happens during a treatment visit?**

Please arrive at the Tomo-Therapy® unit in Radiation Oncology at the time you were given. Check in with the Radiation Oncology reception staff.

The treatments take about 30 minutes. You will see your doctor once a week. In most cases the visit with your doctor is after one of your treatments. You should plan on being in the clinic a little longer on those days.

You will be called into the treatment room, and the therapist will explain the process in detail.

1. You may be asked to remove some clothing or personal items for the treatment.
2. You will be placed on the treatment table. The therapist(s) may need to adjust your position on the table by moving parts of your body.
3. The table will move into the opening of the machine. The therapists will leave the room and perform a CT scan. The therapists are able to see and hear you even when they are not in the room. If you need something, wave your hand or call out loudly. The therapist will stop the machine right away and come into the room.
4. After the CT, the table will move out of the opening. It takes about 5 minutes for the therapists and doctors to review the CT and confirm the treatment field. It is very important for you to hold still.
5. The therapists will then make the needed adjustments and put the table into the scanner for treatment. The treatment itself will take about 5 to 15 minutes.
6. When the treatment is finished, the therapists will come into the room and help you off the table.

**How can I contact my doctor before I start treatment or in-between treatments?**

Treatments are given Monday-Friday. If you need to reach the staff you may call your Tomo-Therapy® unit Monday through Friday between 8:00 and 4:00.

- Treatment Room B: **(608) 266-6405**
- Treatment Room C: **(608) 263-1484**

During your last week of treatment, your doctor will let you know if you need to make any follow-up visits.

If you have any questions or problems once you are home, call the Radiation Oncology Clinic at **(608) 263-8500**.

If the clinic is closed, the paging operator will pick up the call. Ask for the radiation oncologist on call. Give your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

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 © 3/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7230