

TREATMENT LOGISTICS & AT-HOME CARE



Initial Treatment Session: Simulation

The first session, known as a simulation, involves anesthetizing the patient and positioning them as they would be during actual treatment. Specialized laser positioning tools ensure that the prescribed radiation dose targets the precise area intended. Often, non-toxic skin markings are applied to guide subsequent treatments. In some instances, the first radiation fraction is administered immediately following the simulation. The simulation process may take 1–2 hours, depending on the complexity of the treatment plan.

If advanced imaging and computer-assisted planning are necessary, a CT scan is performed during the simulation. In such cases, the first radiation treatment typically begins a few days after the scan. Subsequent treatment sessions, or fractions, are scheduled according to the treatment plan and require light anesthesia to immobilize and accurately position the patient. Each of these sessions generally takes 30–60 minutes to complete.

What to Expect During the Treatment Course

Anesthesia

Each radiation treatment requires your pet to be anesthetized to ensure precise and consistent delivery of radiation to the targeted tissues. Anesthesia protocols are tailored to your pet's specific needs, using a combination of drugs to minimize side effects. Our in-house anesthesiologist is consulted if there are any concerns about your pet's anesthesia status. We monitor the level of anesthesia daily and adjust the protocol as needed to use the smallest effective dose. Radiation delivery itself is not painful; anesthesia is used solely to keep your pet still during the procedure. After each treatment, your pet typically wakes up gently within 15 to 30 minutes and can return home the same day.

At Home

After treatment, your pet may feel drowsy for a few hours. They may be less active during the course of treatment, but usually return to normal once therapy ends.

Home Care During Treatment

Supporting your pet at home is an important part of the treatment process:

- **Diet:** Follow your veterinary team's instructions regarding your pet's daily diet and routine. Avoid introducing new treats or making dietary changes during radiation therapy unless approved by your care team, as stable nutrition can support better recovery and minimize digestive issues.
- **Activity:** Some pets may feel a bit tired during treatment. Allow them to rest and recover at their own pace. Avoid strenuous exercise unless specifically approved by your veterinarian.
- **Medication:** Administer any prescribed medications as directed. These may be used to manage inflammation, pain, or other side effects, and they play a key role in maintaining your pet's comfort.
- **Observation:** Monitor the treatment area daily for any signs of redness, swelling, discharge, or excessive licking. Report any concerns promptly to your veterinary team so they can be addressed quickly.

Caring for your pet at home with attentiveness and consistency will contribute to a smoother and more successful recovery throughout the course of radiation therapy.

Feeding Guidelines

You will be instructed not to feed your pet within 8 hours of the scheduled treatment. Water is allowed up until 2 hours prior to the appointment. These precautions are vital to your pet's safety while under anesthesia. Feeding beforehand increases the risk of vomiting, which, if it occurs while your pet is anesthetized, can lead to aspiration pneumonia if vomit is inhaled into the lungs. If you accidentally feed your pet on the morning of their treatment, please contact us as soon as possible so we can reschedule for later that day or another time.

Supplements and Diet

If your pet is receiving supplements, or you feed a raw or holistic diet, please inform us. Certain ingredients or compounds may interfere with the effects of radiation therapy, and your veterinary team may need to temporarily adjust your pet's regimen during the course of treatment.

E-Collars and Pro-Collars

To protect the treatment area, your pet may need to wear an Elizabethan collar (E-collar), a Pro-collar, or a snug-fitting recovery onesie during the course of therapy. These devices help prevent your pet from licking, scratching, or rubbing the treatment site—behaviors that can delay healing and cause further irritation. Because self-trauma can occur very quickly, consistent use of these protective tools is essential. Although they may seem inconvenient, they are a short-term necessity that plays a crucial role in ensuring a smooth and comfortable recovery.

Treatment Site Markings

During treatment planning and delivery, we may use non-toxic ink or paint to mark the area being treated. In some cases, a small portion of your pet's fur may be shaved to ensure visibility and accuracy. These markings help our team precisely align the radiation field each day. Please avoid washing or removing the markings during the course of therapy, as they are essential for consistency and accuracy in treatment.

After Treatment

Following the completion of your pet's radiation therapy, they will need to return for follow-up appointments. These visits are crucial for evaluating how well the treatment worked and for identifying any delayed side effects. Your veterinary team may recommend physical exams, follow-up imaging, or additional bloodwork depending on your pet's specific condition.

Maintaining open communication with your veterinary care team is essential throughout the recovery process. If you observe any new or concerning symptoms—such as persistent fatigue, changes in appetite, swelling, or discomfort—please notify your care team so they can provide timely support.

We understand that radiation therapy can feel overwhelming. Our team is here to guide and support you and your pet through every step of treatment and recovery. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or need assistance. We're here to ensure the best possible outcome for your pet.

