

Treating Breast Cancer with Radiation

Breast cancer can be treated in different ways. One form of treatment is radiation.

What is radiation treatment?

Radiation uses cancer-killing rays to damage cancer cells and stop them from growing. Some people call radiation x-ray treatment. There are two kinds of radiation treatment. Some women have one kind and some women have both kinds.

- **External radiation** comes from a large machine and is given while you lie on a table. You go to a hospital or clinic 5 days a week for 5 to 6 weeks for treatment. Each treatment takes about 15 to 30 minutes. It does not hurt.



- **Internal radiation** comes from a tube placed in or near the cancer. Some women stay in the hospital, others can go home right after having the treatment.



Who needs radiation treatment?

Radiation can kill cancer cells left after surgery. Most women who have a lumpectomy have radiation afterwards. A lumpectomy is surgery that removes the cancer and some normal area around it.

Questions to ask your doctor before you start radiation treatment.

- Why do I need this treatment?
- When will I start treatment? When will it end?
- How will I feel while I am having the treatment?
- What can I do to take care of myself while I am having the treatment?
- Will I be able to do the things I usually do when I am having the treatment?
- How will my breast look after the treatment?
- What are the chances the cancer will come back?

Talking to your doctor about radiation treatment

Writing down your questions before you talk to the doctor can help you remember them. It may also help to bring a family member or friend with you.



How can I find out more about treatment for breast cancer?

- Call the West Virginia Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (WVBCCSP) at 1-800-642-8522. The call is free.
- or**
- Call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237). The call is free.

