Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT)

This information will help you get ready for your image-guided radiation therapy (IGRT) at MSK. It explains what to expect. It also explains how to care for yourself before, during, and after your radiation therapy.

This resource has a lot of information. Different sections may be helpful at different times. We suggest reading through this resource once before you start radiation therapy, so you know what to expect. Then, refer back to it during your radiation therapy.

This information is general. Your radiation therapy team will design a treatment and care plan just for you. Because of that, some parts of your treatment may be different than what's described here. Your radiation therapy team will talk with you about what to expect.

About radiation therapy

Radiation therapy uses high-energy radiation to treat cancer. It works by damaging the cancer cells, making it hard for them to multiply. Your body can then naturally get rid of the damaged cancer cells. Radiation therapy also affects normal cells, but they can fix themselves in a way cancer cells can't.

Radiation therapy takes time to work. It takes days or weeks of treatment before cancer cells start to die. They keep dying for weeks or months after radiation therapy ends.

About IGRT

IGRT can treat tumors with even more accuracy than traditional radiation therapy. IGRT involves taking many images of the tumor during treatment. This ensures that we're aiming the beam of radiation to the correct area. You won't see or feel the radiation.

You may have IGRT if:

- Your radiation therapy will be given in 1 to 5 treatments instead of multiple treatments.
- Your treatment needs to be very precise, for safety reasons.
- You need treatment in a part of your body where there's movement. It may be:
  - A tumor in your lung or liver that moves when you breathe.
  - A tumor in your abdomen (belly) or pelvis that moves due to fullness or movement of your digestive tract.
  - A tumor in your spine or surrounding areas.

Your role on your radiation therapy team

Your radiation therapy care team will work together to care for you. You're a part of that team, and your role includes:

- Getting to your appointments on time.
- Asking questions and talking about your concerns.
- Telling us when you have side effects.
- Telling us if you're in pain.
- Caring for yourself at home by:
  - Quitting smoking if you smoke. MSK has specialists who can help. To learn more about our Tobacco Treatment Program, call 212-610-0507. You can also ask your nurse about the program.
  - Caring for your skin based on our instructions.

- Drinking liquids based on our instructions.
- Eating or avoiding the foods and drinks we suggest.
- Staying around the same weight.

What happens before IGRT

Simulation appointment

You'll have a treatment planning procedure called a simulation before you start your radiation treatments. Your radiation therapists will take imaging scans during your simulation. They may also mark your skin with little tattoo dots. The imaging scans and tattoos help to:

- Map your treatment site.
- Make sure you get the right dose (amount) of radiation.
- Limit the amount of radiation that gets to nearby healthy tissues.

Your simulation appointment will take about 2 to 4 hours. It may be shorter or longer based on your treatment plan.

Other procedures before your simulation

You may need to have other procedures before your simulation to help with treatment planning. If you need to have one of the procedures below, we will schedule them for you.

- **Placement of markers:** Several gold markers will be implanted into the area to be treated. These markers are the size of a grain of rice and can be seen on x-rays and a computed tomography (CT) scan. Marker placement will be done a number of days before your simulation. You will be told where to go to have it done. Someone from Interventional Radiology will contact you the day before to give you instructions and to confirm the time of your arrival.
- **Myelogram:** A contrast dye will be injected into your spinal canal. This helps us see your spinal cord and surrounding tissues more clearly. This is done several hours before your simulation.
    - A staff member from Radiology will call you the day before your procedure. He or she will tell you what time you should arrive at the hospital for your procedure. If your procedure is scheduled on a Monday, you will be called on the Friday before. If you don't receive a call by

4:00 p.m. the business day before your procedure, please call 212-639-7298.

- You will need to go to the Center for Image-Guided Interventions (CIGI) at 1275 York Avenue between East 67th and East 68th Streets. Take the M elevators to the 2nd floor.
- Your myelogram will be done before your simulation. After you have recovered, you will be brought back to the Department of Radiation Oncology on a stretcher for your simulation.

What to do the day of your simulation

Medicines to take

You'll be lying still in one position for a long time during your simulation. If you think you'll be uncomfortable, talk with your healthcare provider ahead of time. You can also take an over-the-counter pain medicine or your usual pain medicine 1 hour before your simulation.

Talk with your healthcare provider ahead of time if you think you may get anxious during your simulation. They may suggest medicines to help.

What to eat and drink

Your healthcare provider will tell you if you need to follow special instructions for eating or drinking before your simulation. If you don't need to follow special instructions, you can eat and drink like usual on the day of your simulation.

What to wear

Wear comfortable clothes that are easy to take off. You may need to change into a hospital gown for your simulation.

Don't wear jewelry, powder, lotion, or cream in the treatment area unless a member of your care team says it's OK.

Take devices off your skin

You may wear certain devices on your skin. Before your simulation or treatment, some device makers recommend you take off your:

- Continuous glucose monitor (CGM)
- Insulin pump

If you use one of these, ask your radiation oncologist if you need to take it off. If you do, make sure to bring an extra device to put on after your simulation or treatment.

You may not be sure how to manage your glucose (blood sugar) while your device is off. If so, before your appointment, talk with the healthcare provider who manages your diabetes care.

What to expect when you arrive

A member of your radiation therapy team will check you in when you arrive. They'll give you an identification (ID) wristband with your name and date of birth. During your appointment, many staff members will check your ID wristband and ask you to say and spell your name and date of birth. This is for your safety. People with the same or a similar name may be getting care on the same day.

Your radiation therapists will review what to expect during the simulation. If you haven't already signed a consent form, they will go over the form with you. They will answer any questions you have and ask for your signature.

You may need to change into a hospital gown when it's time for your simulation. Keep your shoes on. If you wear a head covering (such as a wig, turban, or cap), you may need to take it off.

What to expect during your simulation

Your radiation therapists will help you lie down on a table and make every effort to ensure your comfort and privacy.

Although the table will have a sheet on it, it is hard and has no cushion. If you have not taken pain medication and think you may need it, tell your radiation therapists before your simulation begins. Also, the room is usually cool. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, let your radiation therapists know.

Throughout your simulation, you will feel the table move into different positions. The lights in the room will be turned on and off and you will see red laser lights on each wall. Your radiation therapists use these laser lights as a guide when they position you on the table. **Do not look directly into the red beam because it may damage your eyes.**

Although your radiation therapists will walk in and out of the room during your simulation, there will always be someone who can see and hear you. You will hear your radiation therapists speaking to each other as they work, and they will explain to you what they are doing. Do not move once your simulation begins because it may change your position. However, if you are uncomfortable or need assistance, tell your radiation therapists.

To help pass the time, your radiation therapists can play music for you.

Positioning and molds

Depending on the area of your body that is area being treated, frames, molds, or masks may be made. These will help you stay in the correct position and will be used with each treatment. It takes about 30 minutes to make these.

- ☐ **Upper spine:** You will lie on your back within a frame, with your hands holding the handles at your sides (see Figure 1). The frame lines up your shoulders and hips to keep you in proper alignment. A mask will be made for you that will extend to your shoulders.

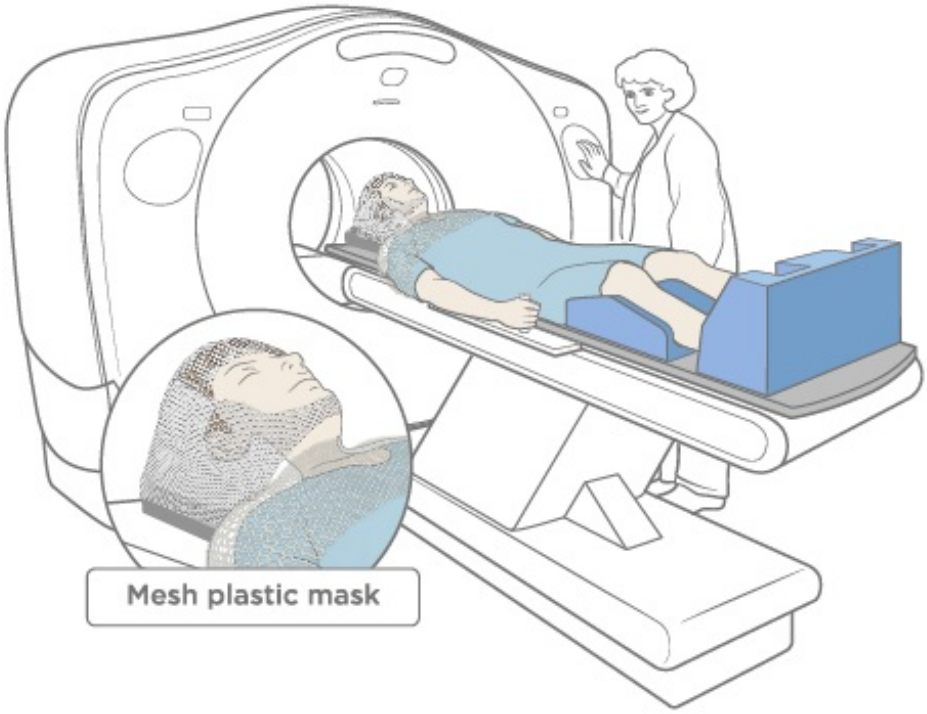


Figure 1. Upper spine mold

☐ **Lower spine:** You will lie on your back with a paddle on both sides of your hips (see Figure 2).

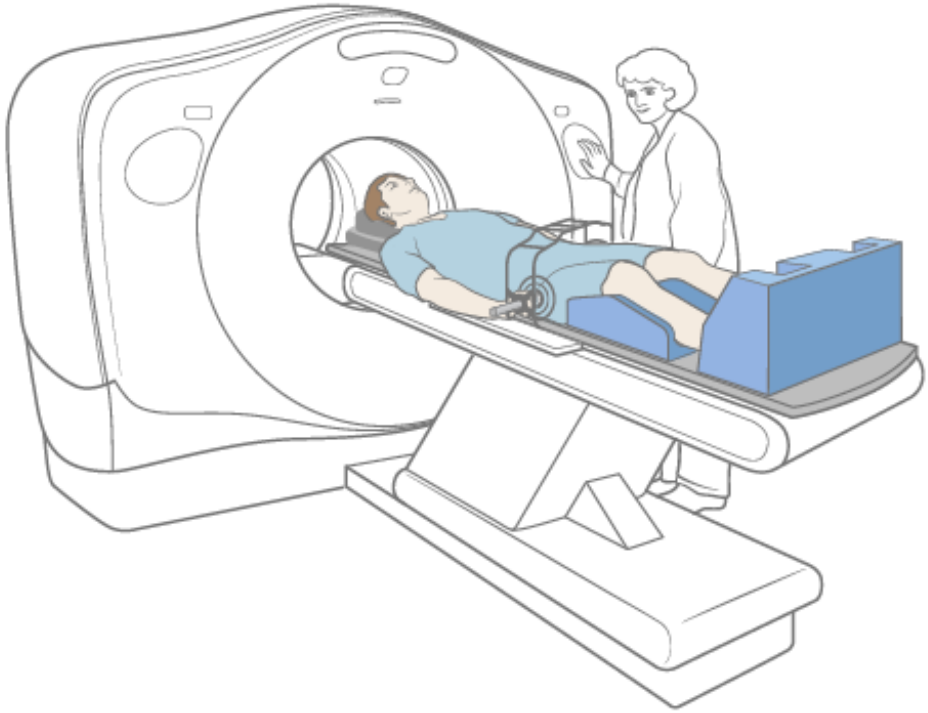


Figure 2. Lower spine mold

☐ **Abdominal compression:** You will lie on your back. You will be asked to put

on a harness-like jacket (see Figure 3). The lower portion will lie across your lower abdomen (belly) and air will be slowly added into it, creating pressure. This is to reduce the movement of your liver while we are taking x-ray images.



Figure 3. Abdominal compression

- ☐ **Face mask:** Your radiation therapist will place a warm, wet sheet of plastic mesh over your face and will shape it to fit around your head. You will be able to hear and breathe without difficulty while the mask is on. As the mask cools, it will harden.
- ☐ **Body mold:** You will probably be lying on your back throughout your simulation. A mold may be made of your upper body to help you maintain the same position each time you receive your treatment. Your therapists will pour a warm fluid into a large plastic bag that will be sealed and placed on the table. You will lie on top of the bag, on your back, with your arms raised above your head (see Figure 4). The fluid will feel warm at first, but it will cool as it hardens. While it is cooling, your radiation therapist will tape the bag to your skin so that it will take the shape of your upper body and arms. This procedure takes about 15 minutes. During your simulation, and each day of your treatment, you will lie in this mold to help ensure you are in the

correct position.



Figure 4. A body mold

X-ray images

While you are lying in your position, you will get x-rays of the area to be treated. These may be done on an x-ray machine called a simulator or on a computed tomography (CT) scan machine. These scans are used only to map your treatment. They are not used for diagnosis or to find tumors. If you need other imaging, your nurse will explain this to you.

It will take about 45 minutes to get your x-rays. During the scan, you will hear the machine turn on and off. Even if the noise seems loud, your radiation therapists will be able to hear you if you speak with them.

Skin markings and tattoos

Your radiation therapists will use a felt marker to draw on your skin in the treatment area. They may also make permanent skin markings called tattoos once they're sure you're in the right position. They'll make the tattoos using a clean needle and a drop of ink. Each one will feel like a pinprick. They will not be bigger than the head of a pin.

After they make the markings, your radiation therapists will take a few photos of you in your treatment position. They'll use the photos and markings to make sure you're in the right position for your radiation treatments.

You can wash off the felt markings after your simulation. **The tattoos are permanent. They will not wash off.** Talk with your radiation oncologist if you're concerned about having tattoos as part of your radiation therapy.

Additional imaging

We may need to use other imaging tests along with the CT scan to help us plan your treatment. These are done the same day as your simulation, right after the procedure. We will schedule these for you and bring you to the area where they will be done. If you think you will feel anxious during these procedures, ask your doctor about medication that may help you relax.

- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI):** This procedure will be done in the Department of Radiation Oncology while you are in the body mold we made during your simulation. It helps us see your spine more clearly.
- **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan:** This procedure will be done while you are in the body mold we made during your simulation. It helps us see the difference between normal and abnormal tissues. This will be done in either the Department of Radiation Oncology or the Molecular Imaging and Therapy Service (MITS). The MITS is sometimes called the Nuclear Medicine service.

Scheduling your treatment

We will schedule your set-up procedure and first treatment at the end of your simulation appointment.

IGRT may be given in several different schedules. Your schedule is based on what your radiation oncologist recommends. It can be:

- A single treatment, usually given on the same day as your setup or beam films.
- Three to 5 treatments, usually given every other day
- Daily treatment, given Monday through Friday, for about _____ weeks.

Call your radiation oncologist's office to tell your care team if you can't come in for treatment for any reason. Talk with your radiation therapist or scheduler if you need to change your schedule for any reason.

Checking your treatment schedule

You can see your treatment schedule in your patient portal, MSK MyChart. If you do not have a MSK MyChart account, you can sign up at mskmychart.mskcc.org. You can also ask a member of your care team to send you an invitation.

It's very helpful to use MSK MyChart to keep track of your appointment times. We will call you if we need to reschedule any of your treatment appointments.

Planning your treatment

During the time between your simulation and first treatment, your radiation oncologist will work with a team to plan your treatment. They will use your simulation x-rays, CT scan, and any other imaging tests that were done to plan the angles and shapes of your radiation beams. They will also determine the dose of radiation that your body will receive. These details are carefully planned and checked. This process takes about 7 business days.

What happens during IGRT

Set-up procedure

Before your first treatment, you will be scheduled for a set-up procedure. This generally takes about 1 hour. If pain medication was helpful during simulation, you may want to take it before this procedure.

When you come for your set-up procedure, you will be shown to the dressing room and asked to change into a gown. Your therapists will bring you to the room where you will receive your treatment each day. They will position you on the treatment table. You will lie exactly as you were lying day of your simulation.

Special x-rays called beam films will be taken to make sure that your position and the area being treated are correct. The beam films will be repeated throughout your treatment. They are not used to see how your tumor responds to the treatment.

Depending on your treatment plan, you may start treatment on the same day as your set-up procedure.

During your treatment

After you check in at the reception desk, have a seat in the waiting room. When your radiation therapists are ready for you, they will tell you to change into a gown. If you are taking any pain medication, you should take it at this time.

Your radiation therapists will bring you into the treatment room and help you lie in your mold on the table (see Figures 5 and 6). You will be positioned exactly how you were lying during your set-up procedure.

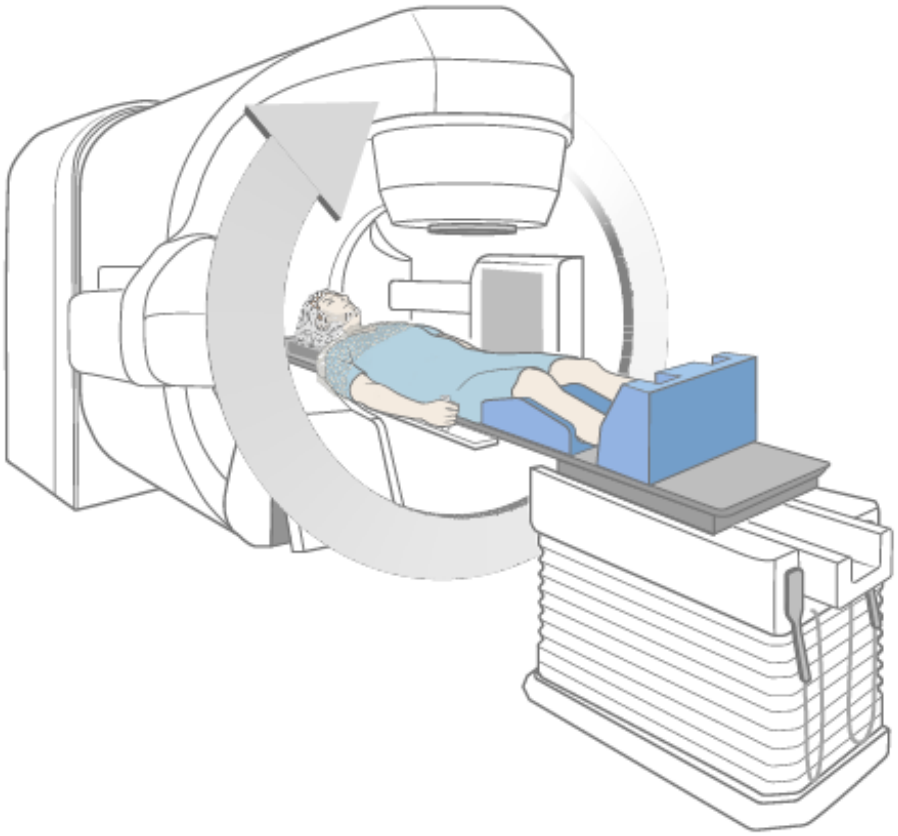


Figure 5. During treatment with upper spine mold

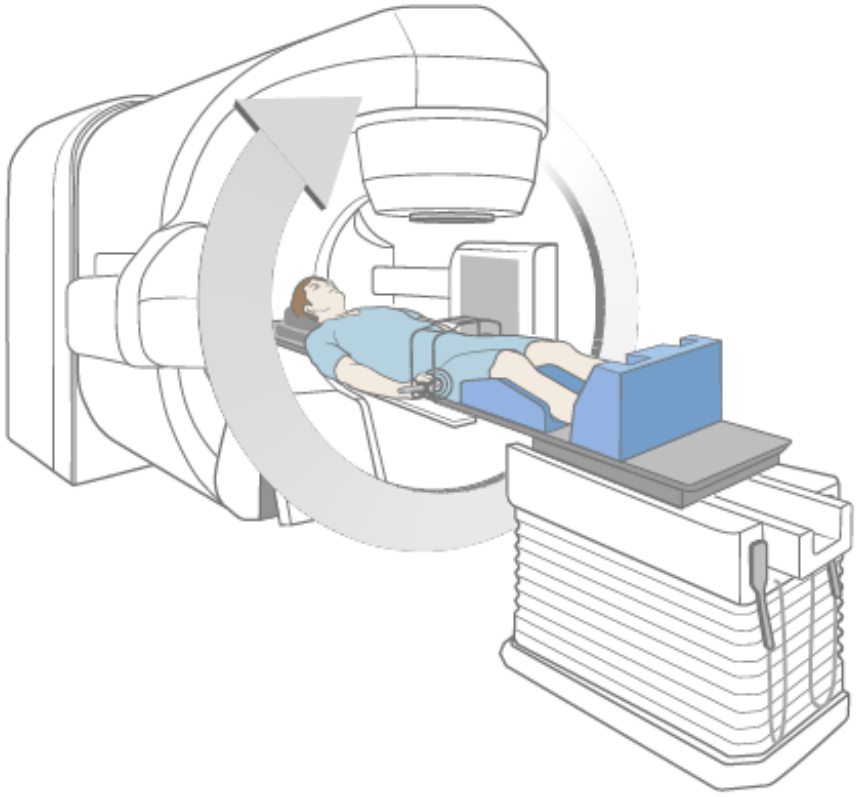


Figure 6. During treatment with lower spine mold

Once you are positioned correctly, your radiation therapists will leave the room, close the door, and start your treatment. You will not see or feel the radiation, but you may hear the machine as it moves around you and is turned on and off. You will be in the treatment room for about 2 hours, depending on your treatment plan. Most of this time will be spent putting you into the correct position. If you are getting more than 1 treatment, the next one may last 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on your treatment plan.

Although you will be alone during the treatment, your radiation therapists will see you on a monitor and hear you through an intercom at all times. They will make sure that you are comfortable during the treatment. Breathe normally during the treatment, but do not move. However, if you are uncomfortable or need help, speak to your radiation therapists. They can turn off the machine and come in to see you at any time, if necessary.

Neither you nor your clothes will become radioactive during or after treatment. It is safe for you to be around other people.

Status check visits

Your radiation oncologist or a radiation nurse will check in with you each week during your radiation therapy. If you're getting 1 or 3 treatments, they'll see you at least once during your radiation therapy. They'll talk with you about any concerns, ask about any side effects you're having, and answer your questions. This status check visit may be a video visit or an in-person visit before or after your treatment.

Call your radiation oncologist's office if you need to speak with your radiation oncologist or radiation nurse outside your status check visit. You can also ask another member of your radiation care team to contact them when you come in for treatment.

Vitamins and dietary supplements during radiation therapy

Vitamins, minerals, and herbal or botanical (plant-based) supplements are examples of dietary supplements.

It’s OK to take a multivitamin during your radiation therapy. Do not take any other dietary supplements without talking with a member of your care team.

Side effects of IGRT

Some people develop side effects from radiation therapy. The type and how severe they are depend on many factors. These include the dose of radiation, the number of treatments, and your overall health. Side effects may be worse if you are also getting chemotherapy. Below are the most common side effects of radiation therapy. You may have all, some, or none of these. Depending on the area being treated, there may be other side effects that your doctor and nurse will discuss with you.

Many patients ask about vitamins. You may take a daily multivitamin if you wish. Do not take more than the recommended daily amount of any vitamin. Do not take any supplements unless your radiation oncologist approves them. This includes both nutritional and herbal supplements.

Swelling around the treatment area

IGRT may cause swelling around the area that is being treated. You may need to take a steroid called dexamethasone (Decadron®) to prevent it. Whether you need it depends on the area we are treating and the amount of radiation you will be getting. If you need the steroid, you will be told how to take it before and after your treatment. Be sure to take it exactly as you are told.

If you develop any symptoms after your treatment, such as increased pain or difficulty moving, call your doctor or nurse immediately. The dose may need to be adjusted or you may need additional medication.

Skin and hair reactions

Your skin and hair in the treatment area may change during your radiation therapy. This is normal.

- Your skin may become pink or tanned after 2 to 3 weeks. It may become bright red or very dark later on, based on your skin tone.
- Your skin may feel dry and itchy and look flaky. Sensitive areas may blister, open, and peel. Tell a member of your care team if this happens.

- You may get a rash, especially in areas where your skin has been in the sun. **Tell a member of your care team if you get a rash.** They can be a sign of an infection.
- You may lose some or all of your hair in the treatment area. Hair most often grows back 3 to 6 months after you finish radiation therapy.

Your radiation nurse may put special dressings or creams on your skin. They will also teach you how to care for your skin on your own. If your skin reactions are very bad, your radiation oncologist may stop your treatments until your skin heals.

Skin reactions sometimes get worse during the week after your last treatment. Call your radiation oncologist or nurse if this happens. Your skin will heal over time once you finish radiation therapy, but it often takes 3 to 4 weeks.

These guidelines can help you care for your skin during your radiation therapy. Follow them until your skin gets better. **These guidelines are only for your skin in the radiation treatment area.** You can care for the rest of your skin as usual.

Keep your skin clean

- Bathe or shower every day.
  - Use warm water and a mild unscented soap, such as Neutrogena®, Dove®, baby soap, Basis®, or Cetaphil®.
  - Be gentle with your skin when you wash it. Do not use a washcloth, loofah, or brush.
  - Rinse your skin well.
  - Pat your skin dry with a soft, clean towel.
- Your radiation therapists may outline your treatment area with a purple felt-tipped marker. You can remove these markings with mineral oil when your radiation therapists say it's OK.
- Do not use alcohol or alcohol pads on your skin.

Keep your skin moisturized

- Moisturize your skin 2 times every day.
- Use a moisturizer without fragrances or lanolin. Lanolin is an oil made by animals that have wool, such as sheep. It can make your skin more sensitive.
    - There are many over-the-counter (not prescription) moisturizers that are good to use. Your radiation nurse may suggest one. Ask them if you're not sure which one to use.
- Only use 1 moisturizer at a time unless your radiation nurse tells you to use more.

Avoid irritating your skin

- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing. Do not wear tight clothing that will rub against your skin.
- Only use the moisturizers, creams, or lotions your radiation oncologist or nurse suggests.
- Do not use makeup, perfume, cologne, powder, or aftershave.
- Do not use deodorant if your skin is broken, cracked, or irritated. You can use deodorant on intact (not broken) skin. Stop using it if your skin becomes irritated.
- Do not scratch your skin if it's itchy. Put on moisturizer. Ask your radiation nurse about ways to ease the itching.
- Avoid shaving your skin. If you must shave, use an electric razor. Stop if your skin becomes irritated.
- Do not put anything sticky (such as Band-Aids® or medical tape) on your skin.
- Do not expose your skin to very hot or cold temperatures. For example, do not use hot tubs, hot or cold water bottles, heating pads, or ice packs.
- Only swim in a pool if you do not have any skin reactions. Rinse off right after you get out.
- Avoid tanning or burning your skin. Use a sunblock with an SPF of 30 or

higher if you're going to be in the sun. Wear loose-fitting clothing over as much of your skin as you can.

Fatigue

Fatigue is feeling very tired or weak. When you feel fatigued, you may not want to do things. You may have trouble focusing, feel slowed down, or have less energy than usual. Fatigue can range from mild (not bad) to severe (very bad). It may be worse at certain times of day.

You may start to feel fatigued after 2 to 3 weeks of treatments. You may still feel fatigued for a few weeks to several months after finishing radiation therapy. Fatigue usually gets better over time.

There are lots of reasons you may feel fatigued during your radiation therapy. They include:

- The radiation's effects on your body.
- Traveling to and from your treatment appointments.
- Not getting enough restful sleep at night.
- Not getting enough protein and calories.
- Having pain or other symptoms.
- Feeling anxious (nervous) or depressed (unhappy).
- Side effects of some medicines.

Ways to manage fatigue

- If you're working and are feeling well, it's OK to keep working. But working less may help you have more energy.
- Plan your daily activities. Pick the things you need or really want to do. Do them when you have the most energy. For example, you may choose to go to work but not do housework. You may choose to watch your child's after-school event but not go out to dinner.
- Plan time to rest or take short (10- to 15-minute) naps during the day,

especially when you feel more tired.

- Try to sleep at least 8 hours every night. This may be more sleep than you needed before you started radiation therapy. You may find it helpful to:
  - Go to sleep earlier and get up later.
  - Be active during the day. For example, if you're able to exercise, you could go for a walk or do yoga.
  - Relax before going to bed. For example, read a book, work on a puzzle, listen to music, or do another calming hobby.
- Ask family and friends to help with chores and errands. Check with your health insurance company to see if they cover home care services.
- You might have more energy when you exercise. Ask your radiation oncologist if you can do light exercise, such as walking, biking, stretching, or yoga. Read *Managing Cancer-Related Fatigue with Exercise* (www.mskcc.org/pe/fatigue-exercise) to learn more.
- Eat foods that are high in protein and calories. Read *Eating Well During Your Cancer Treatment* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eating-cancer-treatment) to learn more.

Some things can make your fatigue worse. Examples are:

- Pain
- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Diarrhea (loose or watery poop)
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling depressed or anxious

Ask your radiation oncologist or nurse for help if you have these or any other symptoms or side effects.

Other side effects

Some people may experience other side effects. Your radiation oncologist or nurse will discuss these with you.

Sexual health

You may have concerns about how cancer and your treatment can affect your sex life. You are not radioactive. You can't pass radiation to anyone else. It's safe to be in close contact with others.

You can be sexually active during your radiation therapy, unless your radiation oncologist gives you other instructions. If you or your partner are able to have children, you must use birth control (contraception) to prevent pregnancy during your radiation therapy.

Talking with your radiation oncologist or nurse about your sexual health can be hard, but it's an important conversation to have. They may not bring it up unless you share your questions and concerns. You may feel uncomfortable, but most people in cancer treatment have similar questions. We work hard to make sure everyone in our care feels welcome.

Sexual health programs

MSK offers sexual health programs. These programs can help you manage the ways your cancer or cancer treatment affects your sexual health or fertility. Our specialists can help you address sexual health or fertility issues before, during, or after your radiation therapy.

- To learn about our Female Sexual Medicine & Women's Health Program or to make an appointment, call 646-888-5076.
- To learn about our Male Sexual & Reproductive Medicine Program or to make an appointment, call 646-888-6024.

- To learn about our Cancer and Fertility Program, talk with your healthcare provider.

Other sexual health resources

Read *Sex and Your Cancer Treatment* (www.mskcc.org/pe/sex-cancer-treatment) to learn more about sexual health during cancer treatment.

The American Cancer Society also has information about sexual health issues during cancer treatment. You can find it online at www.cancer.org/cancer/side-effects/sexual-side-effects or call 800-227-2345 to ask for printed information.

Emotional health

Cancer diagnosis and treatment can be very stressful and overwhelming. You may feel:

• Anxious or nervous • Afraid • Alone • Angry	• Depressed • Helpless • Frustrated	• Numb • Uncertain • Worried

You might also worry about telling your employer you have cancer or about paying your medical bills. You may worry about how your family relationships may change, or that the cancer will come back. You may worry about how cancer treatment will affect your body, or if you will still be sexually attractive.

It's normal and OK to worry about all these things. All these kinds of feelings are normal when you or someone you love has a serious illness. We're here to support you.

Ways to cope with your feelings

Talk with others. When people try to protect each other by hiding their feelings, they can feel very alone. Talking can help the people around you know what you're thinking. It might help to talk about your feelings with someone you trust. For example, you can talk with your spouse or partner, close friend, or family member. You can also talk with a chaplain (spiritual advisor), nurse, social worker, or psychologist.

Join a support group. Meeting other people with cancer will give you a chance to talk about your feelings and learn from others. You can learn how other people cope with their cancer and treatment and be reminded you're not alone.

We know that all cancer diagnoses and people with cancer are not the same. We offer support groups for people who share similar diagnoses or identities. For example, you can join a support group for people with breast cancer or for LGBTQ+ people with cancer. Visit www.msk.org/vp to learn about MSK's support groups. You can also talk with your radiation oncologist, nurse, or social worker.

Try relaxation and meditation. These kinds of activities can help you feel relaxed and calm. You might try thinking of yourself in a favorite place. While you do, breathe slowly. Pay attention to each breath or listen to soothing music or sounds. For some people, praying is another way of meditation. Visit www.msk.org/meditations to find guided meditations lead by our Integrative Medicine and Wellness providers.

Exercise. Many people find that light movement, such as walking, biking, yoga, or water aerobics, helps them feel better. Talk with your healthcare provider about types of exercise you can do.

We all have our own way of dealing with tough situations. Often, we do what worked for us in the past. But sometimes that's not enough. We encourage you to talk with your doctor, nurse, or social worker about your concerns.

What happens after IGRT

Follow-up appointments

It's important to come to all your follow-up appointments with your radiation oncologist. During these appointments, they will check how you're recovering after your radiation therapy.

Write down your questions and concerns before your follow-up appointments. Bring this and a list of all your medicines with you. You can also call your

radiation oncologist or nurse any time after you finish radiation therapy or between follow-up appointments.

Vitamins and dietary supplements after radiation therapy

- You might be getting other cancer treatments along with your radiation therapy. If you are, ask the doctor managing that treatment when it's safe to start taking dietary supplements again. Some dietary supplements are not safe to take before surgery or during chemotherapy.
- If you're not getting other cancer treatments, you can start taking dietary supplements again 1 month after your last radiation treatment.

Tell your radiation nurse if you want to talk with a clinical dietitian-nutritionist about your diet or supplements.

Contact information

If you have questions or concerns, contact a member of your radiation therapy team. You can reach them at the numbers below.

Radiation oncologist: _____
Phone number: _____

Radiation nurse: _____
Phone number: _____

A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

Support services

MSK support services

Counseling Center

www.msk.org/counseling
646-888-0200
Many people find that counseling helps them. Our counseling center offers counseling for individuals, couples, families, and groups. We can also prescribe medicines to help if you feel anxious or depressed. Ask your healthcare provider for a referral or call the number above to make an appointment.

Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service

www.msk.org/integrative-medicine
Our Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service offers many services to complement (go along with) traditional medical care, including music therapy, mind/body therapies, dance and movement therapy, yoga, and touch therapy. Call 646-449-1010 to schedule an appointment for these services.

You can also schedule a consultation with a healthcare provider in the Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service. They will work with you to come up with a plan for creating a healthy lifestyle and managing side effects. Call 646-608-8550 to make an appointment.

Nutrition Services

www.msk.org/nutrition
212-639-7312
Our Nutrition Service offers nutritional counseling with one of our clinical dietitian nutritionists. Your clinical dietitian nutritionist will talk with you about your eating habits. They can also give advice on what to eat during and after treatment. Ask a member of your care team for a referral or call the number above to make an appointment.

Rehabilitation Services

www.msk.org/rehabilitation
Cancers and cancer treatments can make your body feel weak, stiff, or tight.

Some can cause lymphedema (swelling). Our physiatrists (rehabilitation medicine doctors), occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs) can help you get back to your usual activities.

- **Rehabilitation medicine doctors** diagnose and treat problems that affect how you move and do activities. They can design and help coordinate your rehabilitation therapy program, either at MSK or somewhere closer to home. call Rehabilitation Medicine (Physiatry) at 646-888-1929 to learn more.
- An **OT** can help if you're having trouble doing usual daily activities. For example, they can recommend tools to help make daily tasks easier. A **PT** can teach you exercises to help build strength and flexibility. Call Rehabilitation Therapy at 646-888-1900 to learn more.

Resources for Life After Cancer (RLAC) Program

646-888-8106
At MSK, care does not end after your treatment. The RLAC Program is for patients and their families who have finished treatment.

This program has many services. We offer seminars, workshops, support groups, and counseling on life after treatment. We can also help with insurance and employment issues.

Sexual Health Programs

Cancer and cancer treatments can affect your sexual health, fertility, or both. MSK's sexual health programs can help you before, during, or after your treatment.

- Our Female Sexual Medicine & Women's Health Program can help with sexual health problems such as premature menopause or fertility issues. Ask a member of your MSK care team for a referral or call 646-888-5076 to learn more.
- Our Male Sexual & Reproductive Medicine Program can help with sexual health problems such as erectile dysfunction (ED). Ask a member of your care team for a referral or call 646-888-6024 to learn more.

Tobacco Treatment Program

www.msk.org/tobacco
212-610-0507
MSK has specialists who can help you quit smoking. Visit our website or call the number above to learn more. You can also ask your nurse about the program.

Virtual Programs
www.msk.org/vp
Our Virtual Programs offer online education and support for patients and caregivers. These are live sessions where you can talk or just listen. You can learn about your diagnosis, what to expect during treatment, and how to prepare for your cancer care.

Sessions are private, free, and led by experts. Visit our website for more information about Virtual Programs or to register.

Radiation therapy support services

American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology
www.rtanswers.org
800-962-7876
This website has detailed information about treating cancer with radiation. It also has contact information for radiation oncologists in your area.

External support services

There are many other support services to help you before, during, and after your cancer treatment. Some offer support groups and information, while others can help with transportation, lodging (a place to stay), and treatment costs.

For a list of these support services, read *External Support Services* (www.mskcc.org/pe/external-support-services). You can also talk with an MSK social worker by calling 212-639-7020.

Questions to ask your radiation oncologist

Before your appointment, it's helpful to write down questions you want to ask. Examples are listed below. Write down the answers during your appointment so you can review them later.

What kind of radiation therapy will I get?

How many radiation treatments will I get?

What side effects should I expect during my radiation therapy?

Will these side effects go away after I finish my radiation therapy?

What kind of late side effects should I expect after my radiation therapy?

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

About Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT) - Last updated on November 24, 2026
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