Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Using a Testicular Clamshell During Radiation Therapy

This information explains what a testicular clamshell is and why you might use one. It also explains what to expect during radiation treatments with a testicular clamshell.

What is a testicular clamshell?

A testicular clamshell is a protective shield placed around your testicles during radiation treatments. It's called a clamshell because it has 2 halves that open and close around your testicles.

Why you may use a testicular clamshell

During radiation therapy, small amounts of radiation can reach healthy organs and tissues near the treatment area. If your testicles are close to the treatment area, a testicular clamshell helps protect them from radiation.

Parts of a testicular clamshell

A testicular clamshell setup has a few parts.

- **The clamshell.** This goes around your testicles and is split into a top half and a bottom half. Your radiation therapists will place the bottom half under your testicles. Then, they'll secure the top half over your testicles.
    - During your simulation, we'll use a white clamshell made of plastic. This is so it does not show on the imaging scans you'll have during your simulation.
    - During your radiation treatments, we'll use a black clamshell made of metal. This is so it blocks the radiation from reaching your testicles.
- **The clamshell holder.** The bottom half of the clamshell attaches to this holder. The holder supports the clamshell's weight to help make it more comfortable. It also lets your radiation therapists move the clamshell to the same position every time you use it. They can adjust the holder to move the clamshell up or down and closer or further from your body.
- **A silicone sleeve.** This is a soft, stretchy pocket that goes over your testicles before they go in the clamshell. Not everyone uses a silicone sleeve. Your radiation therapists will tell you if you'll use one and talk with you about what to expect.

Figuring out your clamshell size and position

Testicular clamshells come in 3 sizes. During your simulation appointment, your radiation therapists will help choose the right size for you. The clamshell should feel snug but should not hurt.

Your radiation therapists will also figure out your clamshell positioning during your simulation appointment. They'll make sure the clamshell will not block the radiation beams to the treatment area. They'll also adjust the clamshell holder so you're as comfortable as possible. Tell your radiation therapists right away if you feel pain, pinching, pressure, or other discomfort.

You'll use the same size clamshell during your simulation and all your radiation treatments. Your radiation therapists will also set the clamshell holder to the same position every time.

The clamshell you use during your radiation treatments may feel a little different than the one you use during your simulation. This is because it's made of metal, not plastic.

What to expect while you use a testicular clamshell

Your radiation therapists will place the clamshell around your testicles before each of your radiation treatments. They'll check and adjust the clamshell and your position as needed. Then, they'll leave the room and start your treatment.

Stay as still as you can during your radiation treatment and while the clamshell is in place. You can breathe normally unless your care team gives you other instructions.

Your radiation therapists will watch you carefully during your radiation treatments. You'll be alone in the room, but someone will always be able to see and hear you. Tell your radiation therapists if you feel pain, pinching, pressure, or other discomfort. They'll pause your treatment and come in to help you.

Your radiation therapists will take off the clamshell as soon as your treatment ends.

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.

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

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