

Understanding Cancer and Radiation Therapy

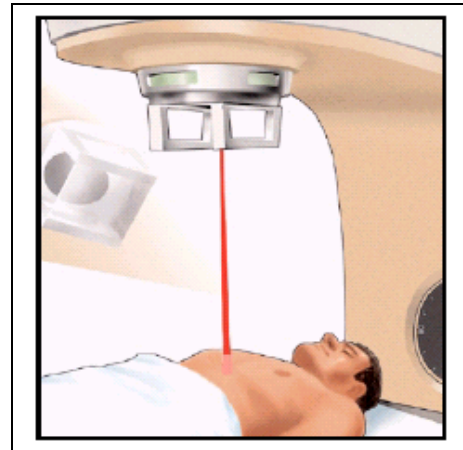
What Is Cancer?

Cells in the body start out normal, growing and dividing the way they should. When normal cells change into cancer, they begin to grow and divide uncontrollably. A group of cancer cells is called a **cancer tumor**.

Radiation therapy can help you in your fight against cancer. Radiation therapy uses high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells.

How Radiation Therapy Works

Radiation destroys cancer cells gradually, over time. The goal of therapy is to focus on and kill as many cancer cells as possible. Radiation can also damage or kill some of the normal cells that are closest to the tumor. Damaged normal cells can repair themselves, often within a day or so.



External Radiation

With external radiation, a machine directs beams of high-energy x-rays at the tumor. The treatment is planned to aim at the cancer and affect the fewest normal cells. The machine can change

Internal Radiation (Brachytherapy)

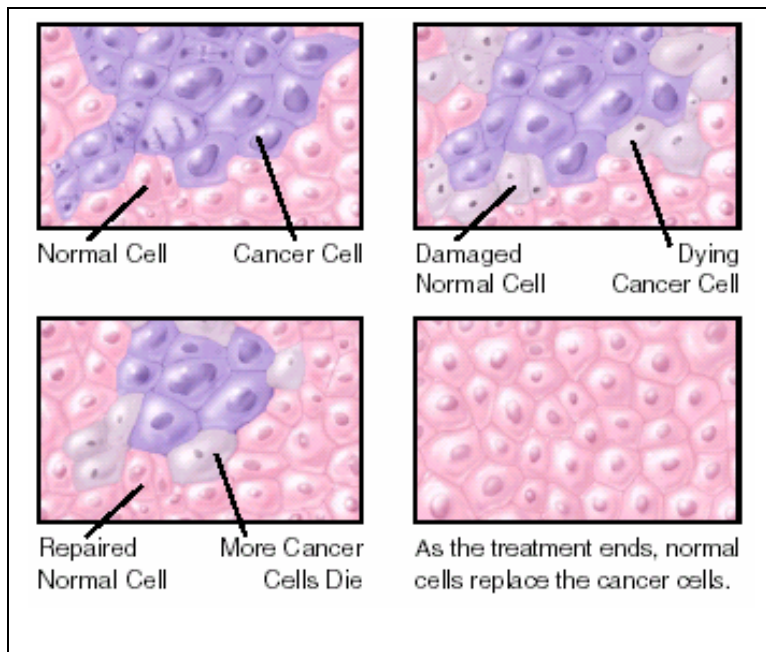
With internal radiation, one or more implants (also called **sources**) are placed in or around the cancer tumor. The implants put the radiation as close to the cancer as possible.

Work

Many people work during radiation therapy. You may need to adjust your schedule. Try to reduce the number of hours you work. Work at home if you can.

Exercise

An exercise program may help you sleep better and control some side effects. Exercise when you have the most energy. Don't push yourself. Instead of jogging, take a walk or ride a stationary bike.



Will Treatment Make Me Radioactive?

- External radiation therapy will not make you radioactive. You don't have to worry about being physically close to friends or family members.
- Internal radiation therapy means that radioactive material is put into your body. So you will have to take some precautions for a short time. Your therapy team will tell you what to do to keep others around you safe.