Cancer Council

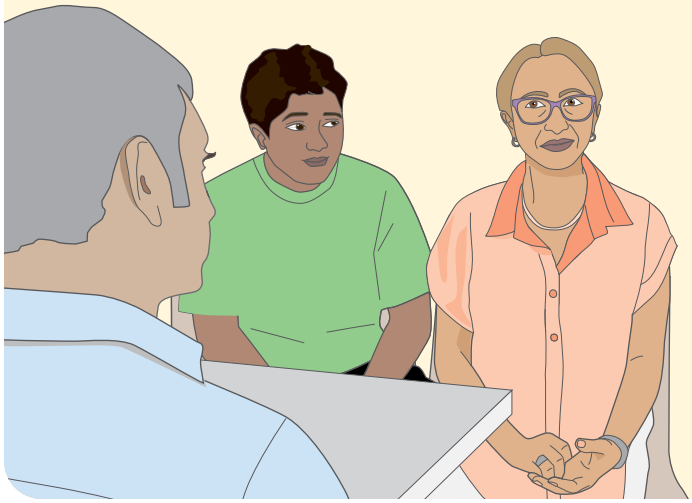
EASY READ

What is radiation therapy?



Visit our website: connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read

Introduction



This information is about cancer and treatment.

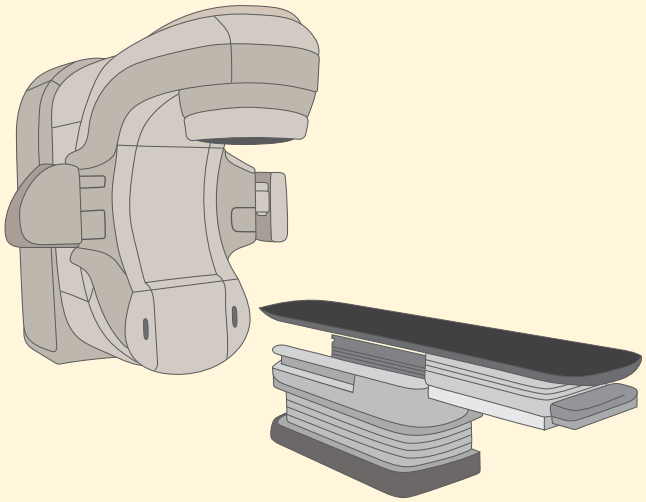


You can ask someone for help to read this information.



Having **radiation therapy** may feel scary. You can ask your doctors questions about anything you do not understand.

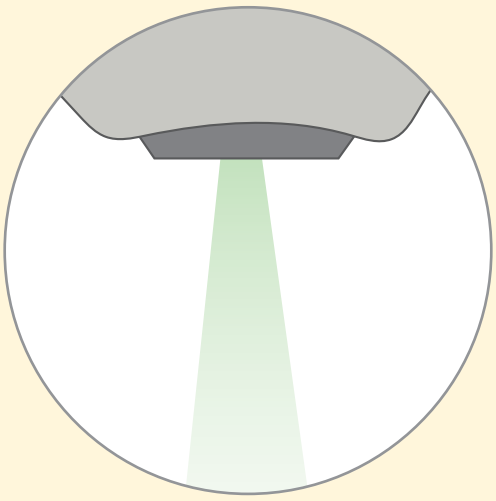
What is radiation therapy?



This fact sheet is about **radiation therapy**. Radiation therapy is treatment for cancer.



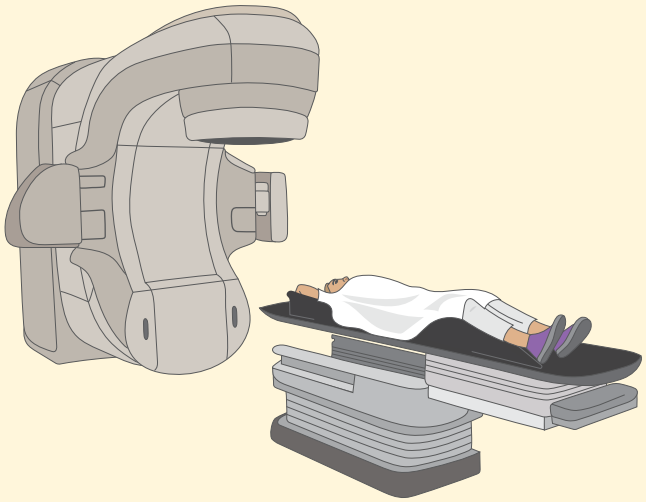
Radiation therapy is also called **‘radiotherapy’.**



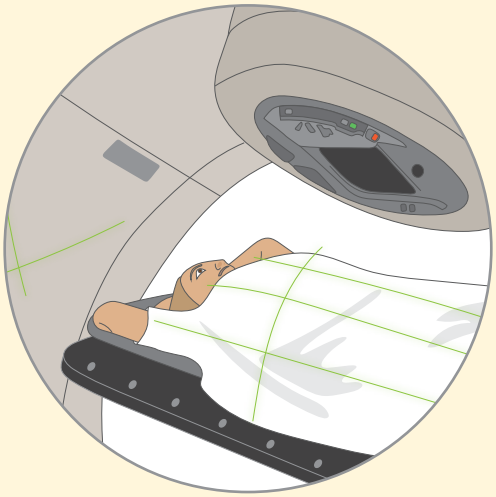
Radiation therapy uses **radiation beams** to kill cancer.

You cannot see the radiation beams.

How you have radiation therapy



The main way to have radiation therapy is from a big machine. This is called **external beam radiation therapy.**



The machine sends radiation beams to the part of the body where cancer was found.



Radiation therapy does not make you radioactive.

Where you have radiation therapy



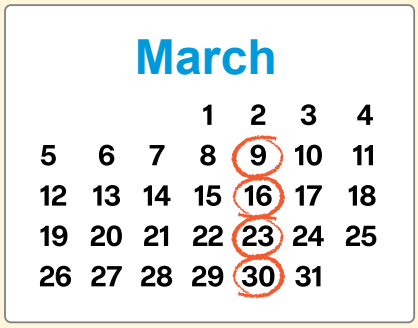
You have radiation therapy in a hospital or treatment centre.



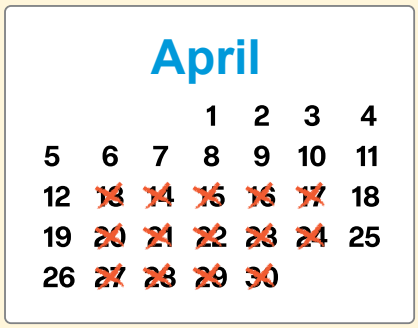
A doctor called a **radiation oncologist** will plan the radiation therapy.

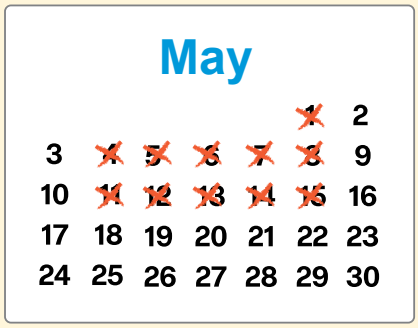


Radiation therapists will give you the treatment.



Your radiation oncologist will tell you how many times you will have radiation therapy.



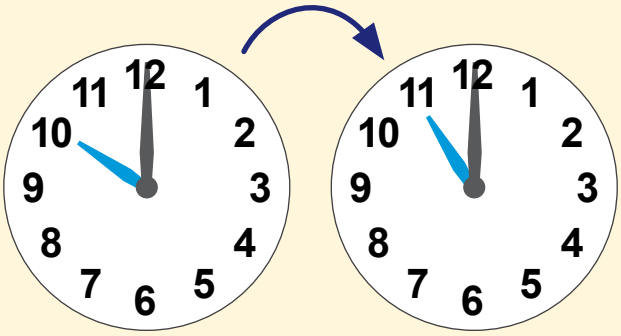


This may be Monday to Friday for several weeks.

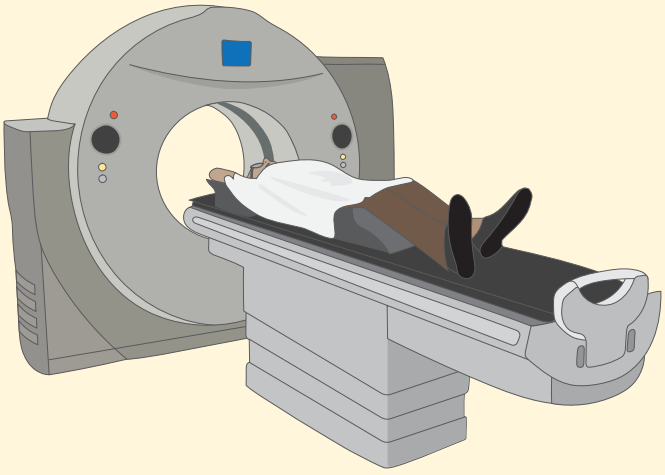
Before radiation therapy starts



Before you start radiation therapy you go to the hospital to have planning scans. This is called **simulation**.



The simulation takes about 30 minutes to 1 hour.

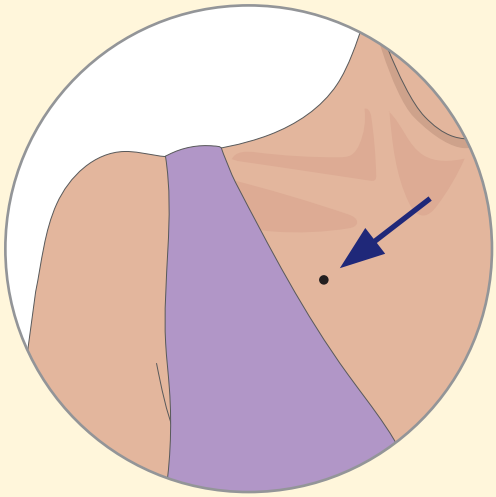


You will have a **CT scan.**

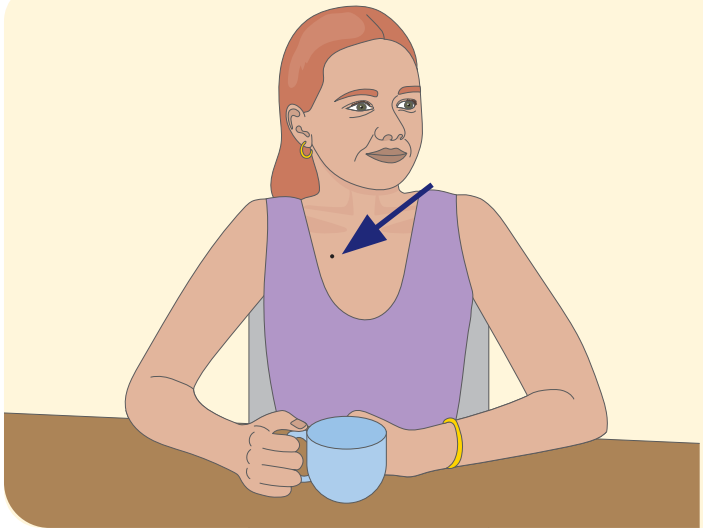
Sometimes other scans may also be done.



The CT scan helps plan where on your body you will have radiation therapy.



You might have some tiny marks put on your skin to make sure you have radiation therapy in the same place every time.

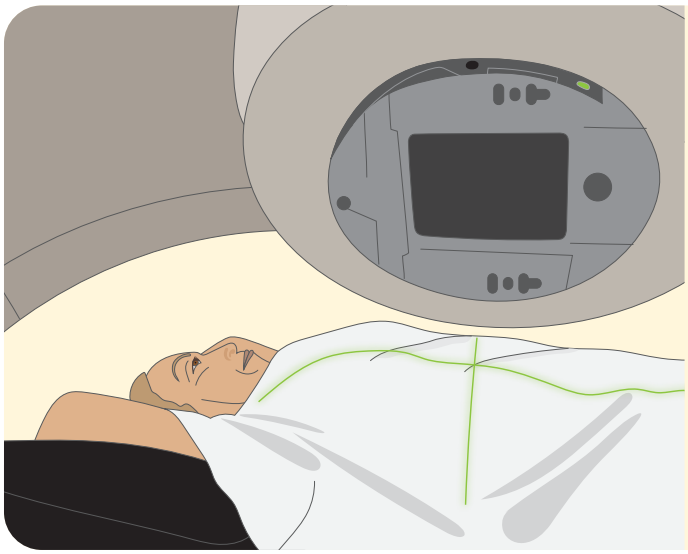


The marks are usually permanent. This means that they will stay on your skin forever.

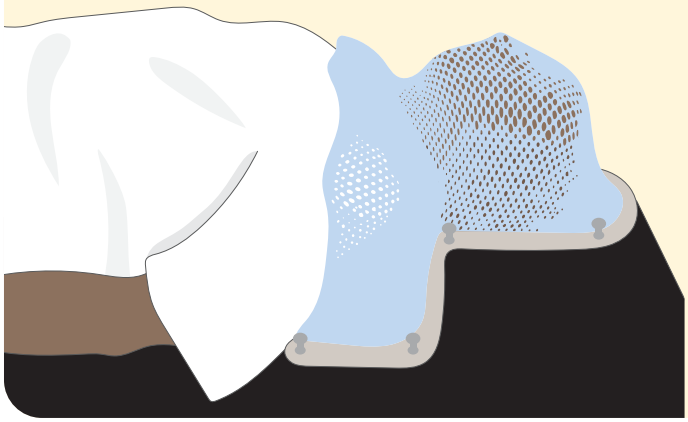
Having radiation therapy



You will lie on a bed under the radiation therapy machine. The radiation therapists help you get into the right position.



You will need to keep still while having radiation therapy.



People who need radiation therapy to the head or neck have to wear a special mask. This keeps the head still.



Radiation therapy does not hurt.

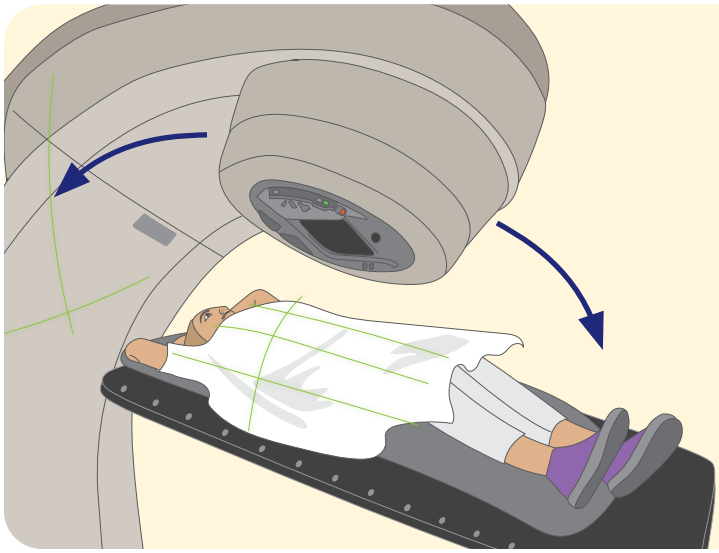
You will not see or feel the radiation beams.



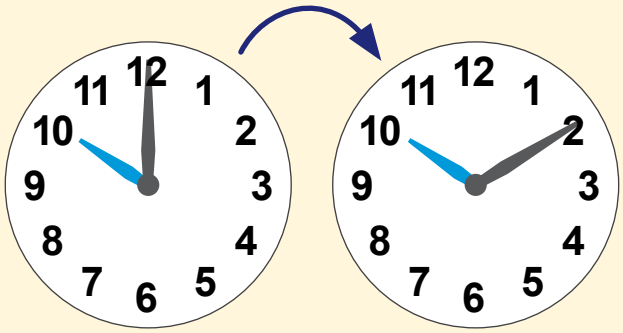
The radiation therapists will leave the room before they start the machine.



The radiation therapists can see and hear you on a computer screen.



The radiation therapy machine moves around you. The machine makes loud noises.



You stay under the radiation therapy machine for only 5 to 10 minutes.

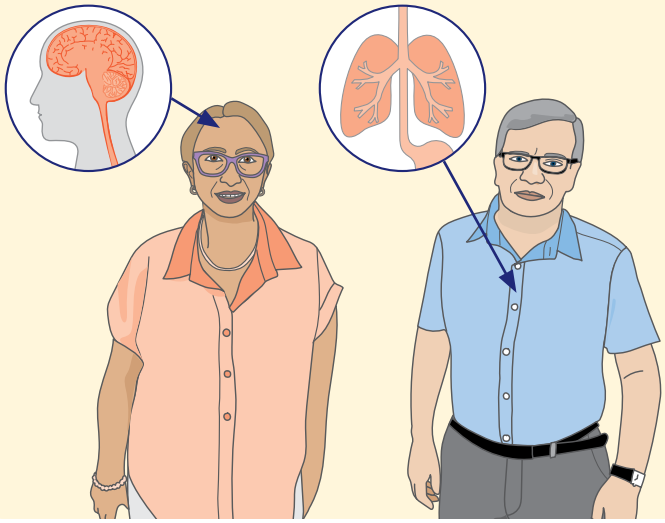


You can go home the same day. You do not stay in hospital overnight.

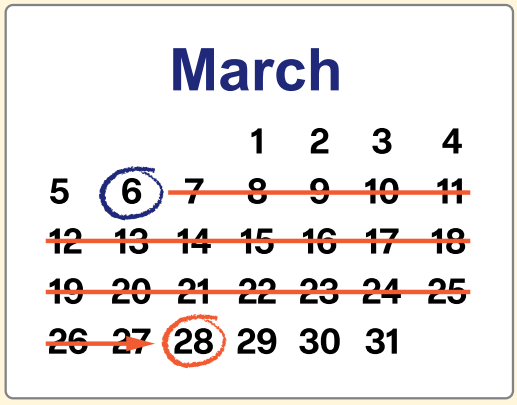
Side effects



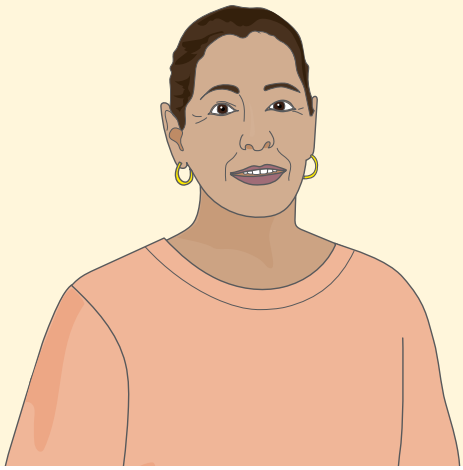
Some people feel sick after they have radiation therapy. We call this a **side effect.**



The side effects will depend on the part of your body treated with radiation therapy.



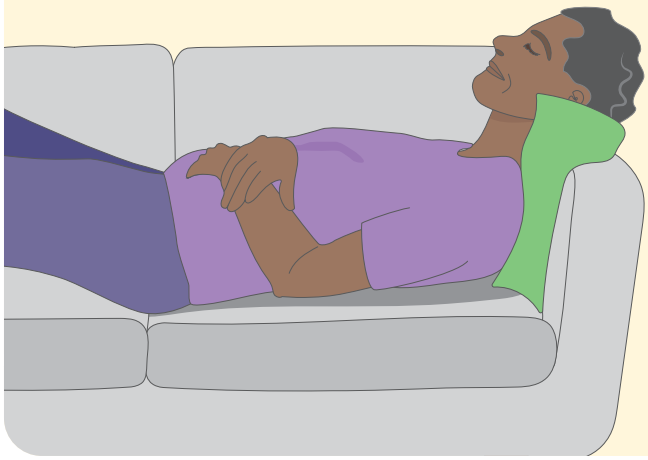
Side effects usually start 2 to 3 weeks after radiation therapy starts.



Most people do not get all the side effects.



The doctor or nurse will tell you what side effects may happen and how to feel better.



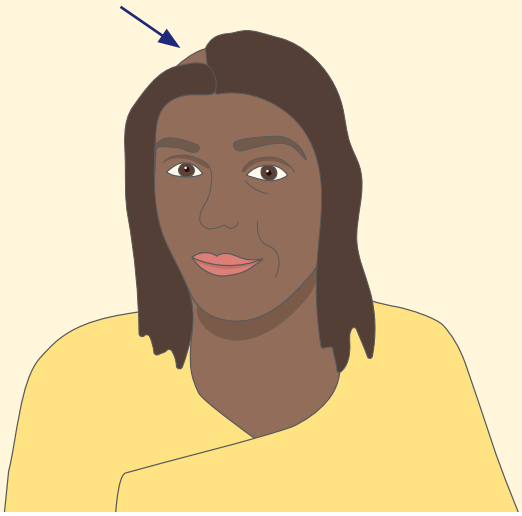
Radiation therapy may make you feel very tired.



The skin where you had treatment might get red.



Hair may fall out in the area where you get radiation therapy. This may be your armpit, chest or head.



Radiation therapy to the head may cause a small patch of hair to fall out. This usually grows back when the radiation therapy ends.



Radiation therapy might make you feel like vomiting. We call this **nausea.**



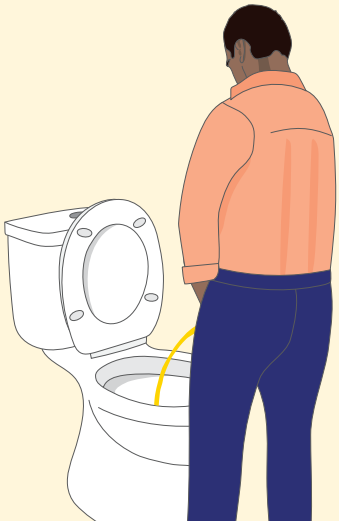
Food may taste different. You might not enjoy eating as much.



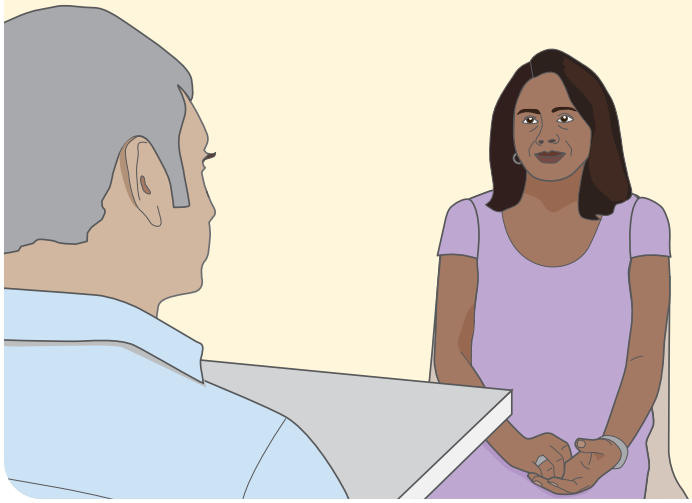
You might get sores in your mouth.



You may have runny poo.
We call this **diarrhoea.**



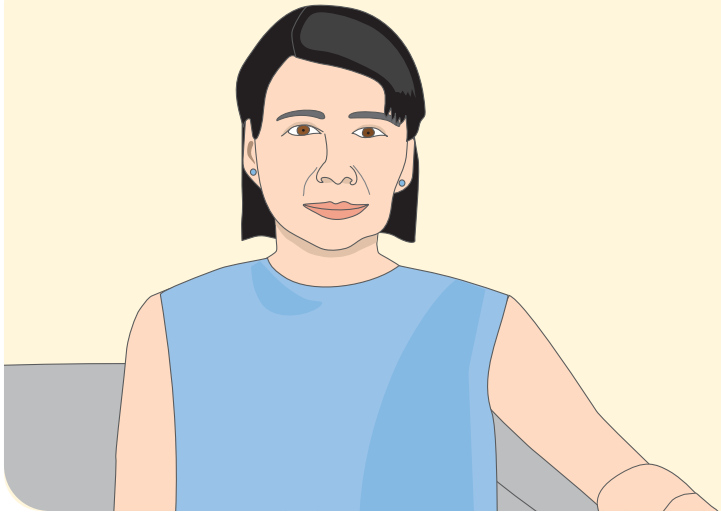
You may need to
wee a lot.



Some side effects can happen a long time after you finish treatment.

Ask your doctor if you notice anything unusual.

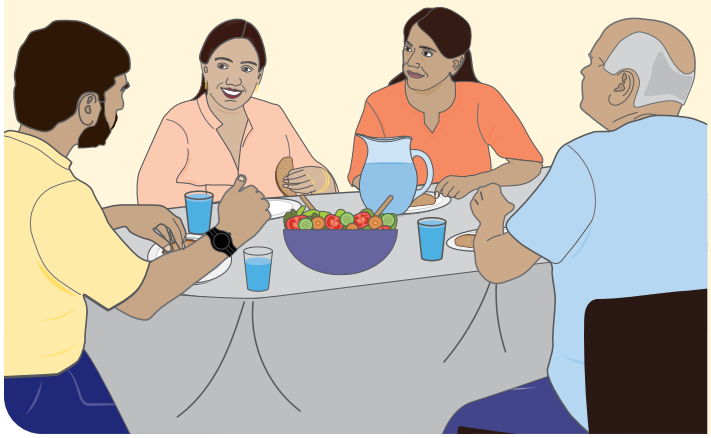
Coping with side effects



It might take a few weeks or months for side effects to stop.



Exercise and eating healthy food can help you feel better.



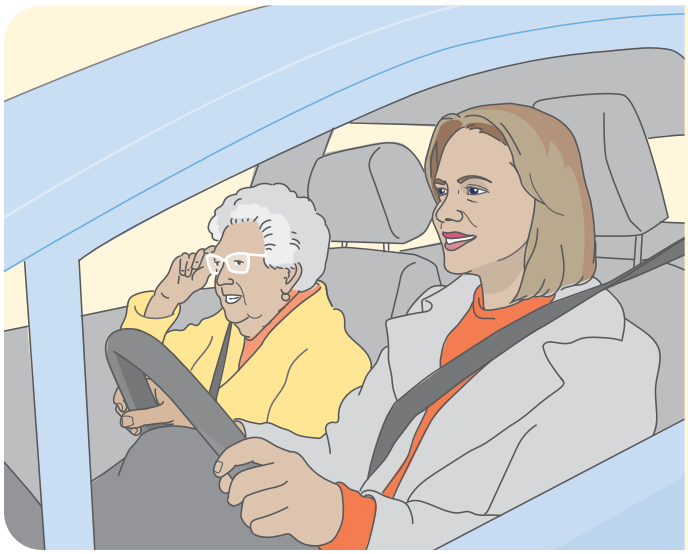
You might worry about cancer and side effects. You can talk to:

- a doctor
- your family or friends
- a counsellor.

For family, friends and carers



Family and friends can help people with cancer in different ways.



You can:

- help with daily tasks
- go to appointments
- listen and offer support.

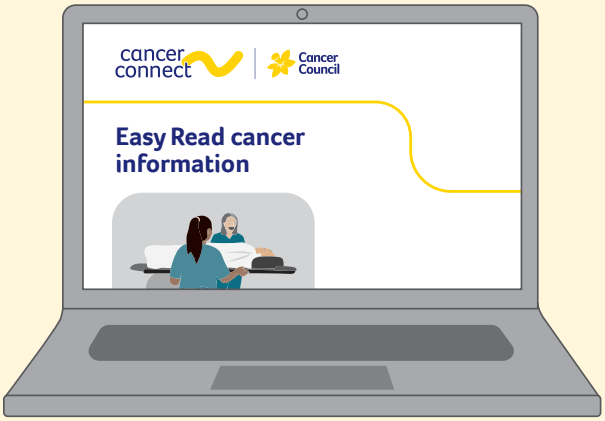


You can ask for help too. Call **Cancer Connect on 13 11 20** to find out about help for carers.

How Cancer Connect can help you



You can speak to us on the phone. We can help you find free cancer information and support. Call Cancer Connect on **13 11 20** Monday to Friday.



You can find fact sheets like this one at our website **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**



We also have:

- booklets and fact sheets
- information in other languages.

You can call **Cancer Connect on 13 11 20** for information and support.

Visit the Cancer Connect website. We have information on cancer, treatment and support. Scan this QR code or go to **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**

If you need information in a language other than English, an interpreting service is available. Call **131 450.**

If you are Deaf or find it hard to hear or speak to hearing people on the phone, you can contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS). **accesshub.gov.au**

Easy Read fact sheet: *What is radiation therapy?*

This information was reviewed by health professionals, other experts, and people affected by cancer. To see a list of reviewers, visit our website **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**

Words: Jenny Mothoneos. Design and illustrations: Caen Clasby, Eleonora Pelosi and Ali Wright, with support from Tracey Nearhos.

This fact sheet is part of a series of Easy Read resources. Cancer Council also has a longer booklet called *Understanding Radiation Therapy.*

Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This fact sheet is intended as a general introduction and is not a substitute for professional medical, legal or financial advice. Information about cancer is constantly being updated and revised by the medical and research communities. While all care is taken to ensure accuracy at the time of publication, Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this fact sheet.

This fact sheet is funded through the generosity of the people of Australia. To make a donation and help change the future of cancer, visit **cancerconnect.org.au** or call **13 11 20.**

Cancer Council acknowledges Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

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