



RADIATION THERAPY

Bone Metastases

Regional Cancer Treatment Service (RCTS)
Radiation Oncology Department



RADIATION THERAPY TO BONE

Bone metastases are cancer cells that originated elsewhere in the body and have now spread to bone. Palliative radiation to treat bone metastases is usually given to reduce pain. Radiation therapy may also reduce the risk of the bone breaking, improve bone healing and prevent or reduce the risk of damage to the spinal nerves if the spine is effected. In certain circumstances, surgery, followed by radiation therapy, may be offered.

Treatment may be given in a single treatment, or over one to two weeks (5 to 10 treatments) depending on the particular bone being treated, the type of cancer you have, previous radiation you have received and your physical fitness.

If you have several bone areas being treated, we will try to treat all of these areas over the same period of time. The exact number of treatments may vary for different areas of the body.

The effect of radiation therapy to the bone, particularly improving pain, may not become apparent for at least one to two weeks after treatment is complete. If the bone pain comes back a few months later, it may be possible to re-treat the bone with further radiation. Your radiation oncologist can discuss this with you.

Radiation therapy to bone metastases is planned using a CT scan.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PLANNING CT SCAN

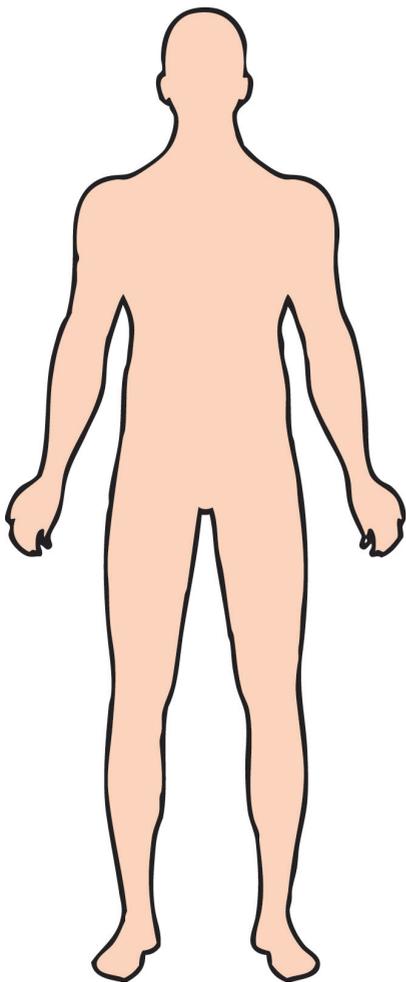
It is important you are able to lie still on a firm flat bed for your planning CT scan and treatment. You may need to take pain relief prior to your appointments to help with this. Ensure you take your medication as directed. If your pain has worsened since you saw the radiation oncologist, please notify the radiation therapy nurses when you see them prior to your planning CT scan. If pain is a problem during treatment, please let your treatment team know.

RADIATION TREATMENT

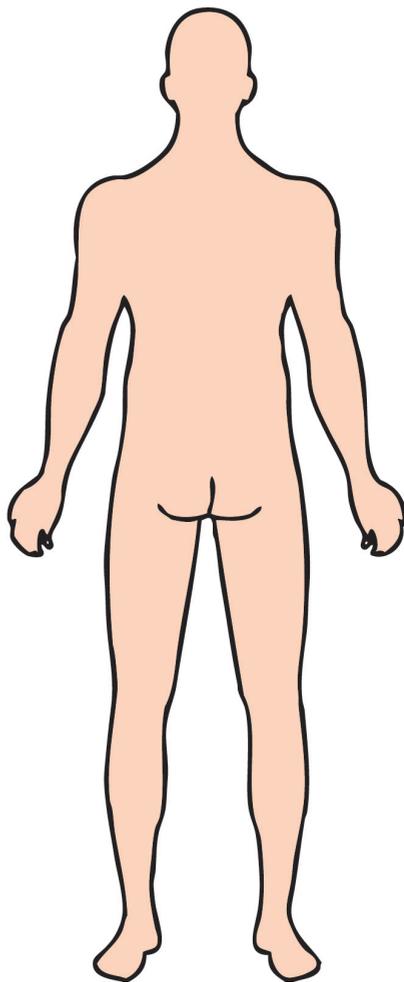
Treatment usually starts one to three working days after your planning CT scan. Radiation therapy to the bone can be associated with side effects. Your treatment team may advise you to take medication prior to each treatment to reduce some of these side effects.

BODY DIAGRAM

This diagram can be used to mark the area(s) of your body being treated.



FRONT



BACK

SIDE EFFECTS

Radiation therapy can result in side effects that develop during treatment and continue for a few weeks after treatment finishes. These are known as acute side effects. The side effects and their severity will vary for each person. You will not necessarily experience all of the side effects mentioned. Side effects vary depending on the area being treated.

These acute side effects are the more common ones experienced, and can continue for a few weeks after your treatment finishes.

SIDE EFFECTS	CARE
FATIGUE: It is common to feel tired and you may have less energy because of the treatment. Fatigue can vary in its severity and is a very individual response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get plenty of rest/sleep when possible. Light exercise may help increase energy levels. However, you may not be up to doing as much as usual.
PAIN FLARE: Your bone pain may increase before it improves due to inflammation in the treatment area. This can occur during treatment and in the few weeks following treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This symptom will resolve on its own but if it is causing you pain, it is important you seek help by contacting your local oncology nursing team, hospice or health care professional specified on your discharge form. If you are not sure who this is, contact the Radiation Oncology Department.
NAUSEA: You may experience nausea if the bone area being treated is close to your stomach or bowel, particularly treatment to the lumbar spine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your radiation oncologist will advise you if they think anti-sickness medication will be needed and will arrange for you to have a prescription for this. If it is very likely nausea will occur, you will be asked to take anti-sickness medication before each treatment. If you experience nausea due to radiation therapy, let your treatment team know.

<p>DIARRHOEA: You may experience diarrhoea if the bone area being treated is very close to a large amount of bowel, especially the bones of the pelvis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you drink plenty of fluid. If you are taking laxatives and develop diarrhoea, stop taking the laxatives. Let your treatment team know if you experience diarrhoea so they can advise you on how to manage it.
<p>SKIN: Your skin in the treatment area may become pink and feel mildly tender or itchy, like sunburn.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath or shower as you normally would, but be gentle with your skin in the treatment area. • Before applying anything to the treatment area, check with your treatment team. • Do not use any harsh products such as exfoliants or loofahs in the treatment area. • When drying the skin in the treated area, do not rub skin with a towel but gently pat it dry. • Do not wear any tight fitting clothes around the treatment area as this can chafe your skin. • Avoid exposing your treatment area to the sun as it is very sensitive during radiation therapy and will burn very easily. You should ensure that the treated area is well protected from the sun for approximately one year after radiation therapy. As part of good skin care, you should always ensure all of your skin is adequately protected against the sun.

FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTRACEPTION

Radiation therapy can be damaging to sperm and a developing baby. During your course of radiation therapy, we advise you to use contraception during sexual intercourse if there is a chance pregnancy could occur.

TRY TO STOP SMOKING

We strongly advise all patients to stop smoking. If you need help giving up smoking, we can put you in touch with support services.

AFTER TREATMENT IS FINISHED

At the end of your radiation therapy course, you will be advised regarding follow-up. If you have any concerns about side effects following treatment, please phone the contact number on your discharge form. If you do not have a contact number, phone the radiation therapy nurses on (06) 350 8438.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

The radiation oncology team is here to help you through your radiation therapy. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to approach any one of our team members. Should you feel unwell, please notify either the radiation therapists when you have treatment, or present to the nursing clinic located at the end of the blue line.

CONTACT US

Radiation Oncology reception (06) 350 8430

NOTES

FEEDBACK

We encourage feedback and assurance is given that comments will not adversely affect your current or future care.

You can do this:

- through discussion with MidCentral Health staff providing your care
- by completing "Tell us what you think..." pamphlets available from all services
- by contacting our Customer Relations Co-ordinator, PO Box 2056, Palmerston North 4440, or phone (06) 350 8980
- by contacting a Health and Disability Commissioner Advocate, phone 0800 112 233