

Possible Side Effects

OF RADIATION FOR PROSTATE CANCER

External beam radiation therapy is not invasive, so it is rare for side effects to show up immediately. With brachytherapy, there may be some swelling, soreness and frequent urination just after the procedure. However, these side effects are from the brachytherapy procedure rather than the radiation itself. Over a period of weeks, other side effects may develop:

- **Urinary frequency**, urgency or a weaker stream are reasonably common side effects. Sometimes there is mild discomfort. The symptoms tend to be more noticeable with brachytherapy. Your doctor can prescribe medication to help relieve these symptoms.
- **Changes in bowel habits** are also common. There is usually some urgency or loose bowel movements. In some cases, you may have some diarrhea, increased gas or some mucus. Less commonly, some men have a flare of hemorrhoids. These side effects are temporary, with long-term symptoms less likely.
- **Mild tiredness** may develop, starting in the middle of treatment. However, tiredness from radiation should improve within a few weeks after radiation treatment ends.
- **Mild skin irritation** may occur with external beam radiation. Clean the area regularly with mild soap and warm water.
- **Impotence** is a common side effect of any treatment for prostate cancer. The risk depends partly upon the ability to have an erection before treatment. Many men treated with radiation can maintain erectile function. Don't be shy about talking to your doctor about your sex life. He or she may be able to suggest remedies or prescribe medication.
- **Infertility** can often occur after radiation. If you are considering having children after radiation treatment, ask your doctor about sperm banking before treatment.

Very rare long-term potential side effects include hip injury, edema (swelling) or a second tumor from the radiation treatment.

Some side effects can be controlled with medications and changes to your diet. Ask your doctor or nurse whether you should make any changes in your diet. Tell them if you experience any discomfort so they can help you feel better.

Visit
www.rtanswers.org
to download a complete
chart of side effects.

| Side effects of Prostate Cancer Treatment | | |
|---|---|--|
| Type of Treatment | Possible Acute Complications (Days-Months after Treatment) | Possible Late Complications (Months-Years after Treatment) |
| Radical Prostatectomy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leakage of urine from bladder or stool from bladder (Incontinence) Shortening of Penis (1-2 cm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic leakage of urine from bladder Erectile Dysfunction Inguinal hernia |
| Brachytherapy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain Burning on urination Urinary retention Blood in urine Increased urinary frequency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erectile dysfunction Rectal bleeding (5-10%) Urethral stenosis (rare) Urethral stricture (rare) |
| External Beam Radiotherapy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue Increased urinary frequency Burning on urination Soft bowel movements Diarrhea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erectile dysfunction Rectal bleeding (5-10%) Changes in bowel habits (5-10%) Radiation induced second cancer (rare) |
| Hormone Therapy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot flashes Impaired sexual function Loss of desire for sex Nausea Diarrhea Itching Weight gain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weakened bones Enlarged and/or painful breast tissue Decreased muscle mass Decreased blood counts |

HELPFUL WEBSITES ON PROSTATE CANCER

National Prostate Cancer Coalition

www.fightprostatecancer.org

Prostate Cancer Foundation

www.prostatecancerfoundation.org

Radiation Therapy Answers

www.rtanswers.org

Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network

www.ustoo.org

FACTS TO HELP PATIENTS MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

Because surgery and radiation can both be equally effective curative treatments for prostate cancer, it is important to review all of your treatment options. Ask your urologist about surgery and your radiation oncologist about radiation therapy. Learn about the risks and benefits to see what best meets your goals balancing cure and quality of life.

LEARNING ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

The radiation oncology team is constantly exploring new ways to treat cancer through studies called clinical trials. Today's standard radiation therapy treatments are a result of clinical trials completed many years ago. For more information, ask your doctor or contact the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4-CANCER or visit www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials.

ABOUT THE RADIATION ONCOLOGY TEAM

Radiation oncologists are the doctors who oversee the care of each person undergoing radiation treatment. Other members of the treatment team include radiation therapists, radiation oncology nurses, medical physicists, dosimetrists, social workers and nutritionists. For information on what each of these professionals does or to locate a radiation oncologist near you, visit www.rtanswers.org.

ABOUT ASTRO

The American Society for Radiation Oncology is the largest radiation oncology society in the world with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating cancer with radiation therapies. ASTRO is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, advancement of science and advocacy.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

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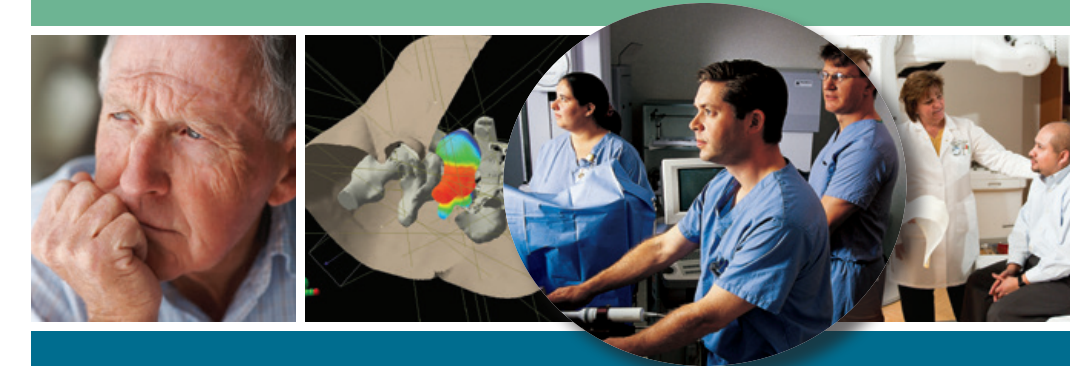
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ASTRO
TARGETING CANCER CARE



Radiation Therapy for Prostate Cancer



Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in American men. According to the American Cancer Society, one in every six men will develop prostate cancer in his lifetime. This year, approximately 180,890 men will be diagnosed. Prostate cancer is very manageable and often curable. More than 99 percent of men with prostate cancer will live more than five years after diagnosis.

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