



One of the hardest parts of receiving a cancer diagnosis is the uncertainty and questions that follow.

Cancer treatment looks different for every person. If radiation therapy is part of your or a loved one's cancer journey, we want you to know that your radiation therapy team is with you every step of the way. **You are not alone.**

2 million

Americans are diagnosed with cancer every year¹

1 million

Americans will receive radiation therapy to treat their cancer

18.1 million

cancer survivors live in the U.S. today¹



Survival rates for cancer improve every year

When you learn more, fear loses its power. Radiation Therapy in Focus is designed to help people focus on high quality cancer care options by raising awareness of radiation therapy's value. We want you to know about the effective, focused and precise treatments available for people living with cancer.



Learn more about radiation therapy and access other resources.

[RTAnswers.org](https://www.rtananswers.org)

1. Cancer statistics. (2024, May 9). Cancer.gov. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/statistics>

Frequently Asked Questions



Radiation therapy, also known as radiotherapy, is a procedure used to treat cancer and other diseases. Since its invention, radiation therapy has advanced significantly to be the safe, precise and effective treatment doctors use today. There's a lot of misinformation about radiation therapy that prevents people from seeking this potentially life-saving care. Below are the facts to help you learn why radiation therapy might be a good option to manage your cancer care.

What is radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy is a treatment that uses strong energy beams to destroy cancer cells or stop them from growing.

How does radiation therapy work?

Radiation therapy works by damaging the genetic material within cancer cells so that they are not able to grow and spread. When these damaged cancer cells die, the body naturally removes them.

What types of cancers can be treated with radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy can be used alongside other treatments, such as surgery or chemotherapy, to treat many different types of cancer. The most common cancers – breast, prostate and lung cancers – are often treated with radiation therapy. Radiation therapy is also used to treat a wide range of other cancers and diseases.

What does treatment look like?

A radiation beam is incredibly precise, so only the specific cancer area will be targeted. The number of sessions you need depends on your type of cancer and its stage. You might need just one session, or you might have to go every day for a few weeks.

What are the side effects of radiation therapy?

The effects of radiation therapy are cumulative, so you may not feel any side effects until you've had several treatments. Side effects depend on where the treatment is directed on your body. Side effects are different for everyone and mainly focused on the area treated but might include feeling tired or nauseous, skin irritation or changes in appetite.

Is radiation therapy painful?

While the treatment itself doesn't hurt, some people might feel discomfort or pain in the treatment area, which can continue for a few weeks following treatment. Your health care team will work with you to help manage any side effects.

Will radiation therapy affect my fertility?

Radiation therapy's impact on your fertility depends on the type and location of the cancer and where the treatment is directed. It's a good idea to talk to your doctor about this before starting treatment.

Will I be radioactive after the treatment?

No, you won't be radioactive after external beam radiation therapy. If you have internal radiation therapy (brachytherapy or radiopharmaceuticals), you may have to avoid close contact with others for a short time.

What happens after I finish radiation therapy?

After you finish your treatment, you will have follow-up appointments to check on your recovery and see how well the treatment worked. Your doctor will use tests to monitor how you are doing.