

Radiation Oncology Patient & Family Guide



The Radiation Oncology department is part of the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center at Hillcrest Hospital. The department provides high quality radiation treatment in a convenient community setting, and is the largest, most technologically advanced radiation program on Cleveland's east side.

What is Radiation Oncology?

Radiation oncology is a type of treatment that uses high levels of radiation to kill cancer cells, or keep them from growing, while minimizing damage to healthy cells. Radiation is delivered externally through a linear accelerator, a state-of-the-art machine with the capacity to treat deep and superficial cancers. About half of all people treated for cancer undergo radiation therapy. Radiation can be used alone or in combination with other therapies, such as surgery or chemotherapy.

A Team of Specialists

During the course of your treatment, several members of the radiation oncology team will be working with you. A Cleveland Clinic radiation oncologist – a physician trained in the treatment of cancer using radiation therapy – will consult with you and oversee all aspects of your radiation treatment. A radiation physicist and dosimetrist will assist in determining the appropriate dosage, and specially trained radiation therapists will deliver the treatments. An oncology nurse, social worker and dietician are also available to assist you and your family.

The Treatment Process

The first step of the treatment process is a thorough evaluation, including a physical exam. At this appointment, your doctor will review your medical records and X-rays, discuss with you the reasons for treatment and explain the procedures, risks and benefits of radiation therapy.

Your next visit is a treatment-planning appointment. This is called a “simulation” and it involves taking the measurements necessary to



determine the exact area to be treated. This process involves a special type of CT scan. The radiation therapist usually will mark the areas to be treated with temporary skin marks and tiny permanent marks the size of a freckle. Once the information is recorded, a treatment planning computer calculates the precise positions for the radiation beams and the appropriate dosage is determined.

You will return for one final check of the positions and your treatment will begin either that day or soon thereafter. Radiation treatments are usually scheduled between 7:00am and 4:00pm, Monday through Friday. The scheduled treatment times will generally be the same each day and we will make every effort to give you the time that you prefer. The length of the treatment plan varies based on the patient's needs.

Do Insurance Companies Require Precertification?

Most insurance companies require a referral and precertification for most cancer treatments. A precertification coordinator will contact your insurance company. If you have any questions or concerns call 440.312.4305 and ask to speak to the precertification coordinator.

What Happens on Treatment Days?

On the first day of your treatment, check in a few minutes before your scheduled appointment. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. When your treatment is ready, the radiation therapist will escort you to the treatment area.

Your family is encouraged to come with you to meet your radiation therapy team. They will be able to join you after the doctor and nurse examine you, and will have the opportunity to ask questions.

In the treatment room, your radiation therapists will help you onto the treatment table and place you in the correct treatment position. Once you are positioned correctly, the therapists will leave the room and start the treatment. You will be under constant observation during the treatment. Cameras and an intercom are in all treatment rooms, so the therapists can always see and hear you. The therapists will be in and out of the room to reposition the machine. It is important that you remain still and relaxed during treatment. The linear accelerator (the machine giving the treatment) will not touch you, and you will feel nothing during the treatments. Once each treatment has been completed, the therapists will help you off the treatment table.

Once a week during your radiation therapy course, your physician and nurse will evaluate your treatments. This is called “clinic day,” and it provides you with an opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about your treatment or your medications. On clinic day, you will remain in your gown during the evaluation, since an exam may be done in order to evaluate how the radiation treatments are progressing. The doctor will evaluate any side effects that may occur from the treatment, and you may also have blood work, X-rays or other diagnostic tests. Even though clinic days are once a week, your physician, radiation therapists and/or nurse are available every day to address any problems or concerns about your treatment, medication or side effects.

Side Effects

Most people experience few side effects from radiation therapy. The majority are able to continue working during treatment. If you do suffer from side effects, your physician can offer medical treatments to relieve your



discomfort or symptoms. Your radiation oncologist will discuss potential side effects with you at your first meeting.

Will My Diet Make a Difference?

Yes. Good nutrition is an important part of recovering from the side effects of radiation therapy. When you are eating well, you have the energy for the activities you enjoy, and your body is able to heal and fight infection. Most importantly, good nutrition can give you a sense of well-being. When you don't feel well, eating can be difficult. Therefore, a dietician is available to work with you during your therapy to help with any nutritional concerns you may have. If you are referred to a dietician, or you request to see the dietician yourself, an appointment will be scheduled as close to your treatment time as possible.

Support Services

The Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center at Hillcrest Hospital offers a wide range of support services to help you cope with your cancer and your course of treatment. The oncology social worker can discuss any emotional issues,



fears, expectations or other concerns about your treatment or personal situation. People dealing with certain medical issues usually find it helpful to share experiences with others in the same situation. Your social worker can provide information regarding area support groups.

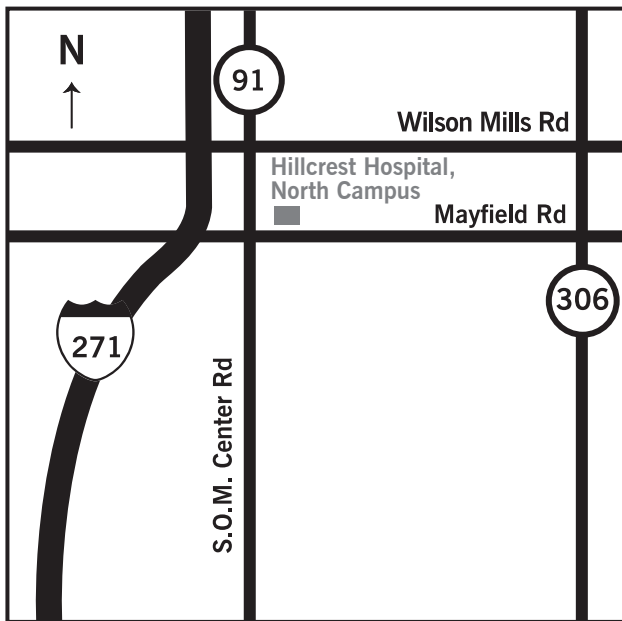
Transportation

Transportation can be difficult for people who are undergoing daily radiation therapy treatments. We are pleased to offer courtesy round-trip van service to those patients who qualify. Please ask your nurse or physician for information if you are interested in this service.

Follow-up Care

Once your radiation treatments are completed, we will continue to provide follow-up care and track your progress through periodic follow-up exams and diagnostic X-rays.

You are also welcome to contact us after your treatment to arrange for a consultation to discuss your treatment or any side effect that may concern you.



Hillcrest Hospital

6780 Mayfield Road
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124
hillcresthospital.org

Directions

From the North and South: Take I-271 and exit at Mayfield Road (Rt. 322) heading east. Follow the hospital signage. Cross SOM Center Road (Rt. 91), then proceed approximately 800 feet ahead and enter the four-lane driveway into the Hillcrest Hospital complex.

From the East: Take Mayfield Road (Rt. 322) west; Hillcrest Hospital is located on the south side of Mayfield Road in Mayfield Heights.

From the West: Take Mayfield Road (Rt. 322) east. Cross SOM Center Road (Rt. 91), then proceed approximately 800 feet ahead and enter the four-lane driveway into the Hillcrest Hospital complex.

Contact Us

For more information
regarding radiation
oncology at Hillcrest
Hospital, call
440.312.4700.



Hillcrest Hospital
a Cleveland Clinic hospital