External Beam Radiation Therapy for Prostate Cancer

Radiation Therapy is a type of cancer treatment that uses high doses of radiation to kill cancer cells and stop them from spreading. There are 2 main types of radiation therapy used for prostate cancer: **external beam radiation** and **internal radiation**. External beam therapy uses a machine outside your body to aim radiation at your cancer. Internal radiation therapy puts radiation directly inside your body where your cancer is located.

There are many steps that will need to be done before you can start your external beam radiation treatments. You may have gold markers put in your prostate to help direct the radiation treatment to the area where your cancer is located. You will also have a CT scan to help plan your treatment. This handout gives you information about these steps and how to plan for your radiation treatment.

Gold Markers

Your doctor may want you to have gold markers put in your prostate to help direct your radiation therapy. Here is what to expect with this procedure:

- You will need to undress from the waist down and lie down on a table and place your feet up in stirrups.
- Your doctor will clean your skin and numb the whole area with a medicine called lidocaine.
- Your doctor will insert a probe into your rectum. The probe is about 1 inch around and 5 inches long. It is covered with a gel-filled condom. The probe is used to take a picture of your prostate to let your doctor see the size and shape of your prostate.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

• Your doctor will then use a small needle to numb the area around your prostate.

• Once numb, your doctor will put small gold markers in your prostate to locate your prostate during your radiation treatment.

• Before you leave, you will be scheduled to come back for a CT simulation.

CT Scan Simulation
A CT Scan, also called a simulation, is used to help plan your treatment. This procedure is done in the radiation therapy unit. During this scan a radiation therapist will use a permanent marker to put small marks on your skin to show the exact area of your body that needs treatment. It is important to keep these marks on your skin until all your radiation therapy treatments are done.

Preparing for Your CT Scan
To prepare for your CT scan, you will need to:

• Empty your bowels before your CT scan. If you often have large amounts of gas or constipation, use a Fleet Enema the morning of your scan or take a mild laxative the night before your scan.

• You will need to empty your bladder 1 to 2 hours before your CT scan. When you arrive for your CT scan, you will need to drink 2 cups of water (16 ounces). It is important to have your bladder full during your scan, but not so full that you are uncomfortable. **You will not be able to urinate again until after your CT scan.**

• You do not need to fast before your CT scan. You can eat as you would normally.

Starting Radiation Treatments
After your CT scan, the radiation therapist will talk to you about when your radiation treatments will begin. It can take 1 to 2 weeks for your treatment plan to be completed. You will have a treatment each day, Monday through Friday for several weeks (treatments are not given on holidays). Your treatment schedule will depend on what is ordered by your doctor.

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Your Radiation Treatment

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If you would like, you can come alone for your radiation therapy treatments. You will be able to drive home after your treatment. You do not need to limit your contact with loved ones while you are having treatments. If needed, a social worker is available to give you information about lodging and transportation resources. The James also has a support group for you or your partner to meet others dealing with prostate cancer.

If you have any questions, talk with your health care team or call the Radiation Oncology Department at (614) 293-8415.