

Your doctors have decided on radiation therapy as part of your treatment plan for breast cancer. After your consultation appointment with your radiation oncologist, you will have an appointment for a planning simulation/CT.

### Simulation

A simulation is used to map your treatment site, ensure delivery of the right dose of radiation to the target area, and ensure that tissues near the target area get as little radiation as possible during treatment.

During your simulation, you'll undergo a CT scan in the radiation department. Your skin will be marked by a radiation therapist. These marks will be used to help position you for your daily treatment. Some of these marks will be made with black marker and should not be rubbed off. When bathing or showering, let the water run over them, but do not scrub the marks. Some of the marks will be permanent tattoos that are about the size of a tiny freckle.

Unless instructed otherwise, you may eat and drink as you normally would on the day of your simulation.

During the simulation, you'll be lying in one position for a long time (appointments are about 45-60 min). If you think you will be uncomfortable lying still, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or your usual pain medication prior to your appointment.

Make sure to wear comfortable clothes that are easy to take off because you may need to change into a gown. Do not wear jewelry, powders, or lotions.

### Side Effects

Some people develop side effects from radiation therapy. Which side effects and how severe depend on a number of factors: the area being treated, the dose of radiation, the number of treatments, and your overall health. Below are some side effects you may experience and what you can do if you experience them.

### Skin changes in the treatment area: dryness, itching, pinkness, peeling

#### What you can do.

Keep your skin clean:

- Bathe or shower daily using warm water and mild unscented soap (Neutrogena, Dove, Cetaphil, etc). Rinse well and pat dry.
- You may use aluminum free deodorant if skin is not cracked, open, or irritated.
- Be gentle with your skin in the treatment area. Do not scrub.
- Do not use alcohol or alcohol pads on the skin being treated

Moisturize your skin:

- Choose a moisturizer that does not have fragrances or lanolin.
- Apply moisturizer 2 times a day beginning at the start of treatment.  
**DO NOT APPLY LOTION WITHIN 4 HOURS PRIOR TO TREATMENT.**

Avoid irritating skin:

- Wear loose-fitting cotton bras or sports bras. Go without a bra if you feel comfortable doing so.  
**NO UNDERWIRE BRAS.**
- Do not shave under the arm on the side we are treating.
- Do not scratch skin in treatment area
- Do not expose skin in the treatment area to extreme hot or cold temperatures.
- Avoid sun exposure to treated area. Wear clothing that will cover the entire area and use a PABA-free sunblock with an SPF 30+.

Manage pain:

- If the skin reaction becomes painful, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) per package directions.

Contact your nurse/physician if:

- You notice a rash in the treatment area
- You develop open weeping skin or blisters
- You develop a fever of 100.4F or higher

### Swelling of the treated breast.

#### What you can do.

- Some swelling in the treated breast is expected.
- If the swelling becomes uncomfortable, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) per package directions.

### Lymphedema of the arm of the treatment side.

#### What you can do.

- Inform your nurse or physician. Your physician can have you evaluated by a physical therapist who specializes in lymphedema treatment.

### Fatigue

#### What you can do.

- Plan time to rest or take short naps (10 to 15 min) during the day.
- Try to sleep at least 8 hours every night.
- Plan your daily activities. Do activities that are necessary and most important to you first. Do those when you have the most energy.
- Ask family and friends to help.
- Continue to do light exercise (walking, stretching, yoga).

### Breast Self-Exams

You should continue to do monthly breast self-exams on your untreated breast. If you have any questions about how to do the exam, talk to your treatment team. When your treatments are complete, you will receive instructions about follow-up exams and when to schedule mammograms. If you notice any changes when doing the self-exams or any unusual changes in the treated breast, notify your physician.

**Contact Your Radiation Oncologist or Radiation Nurse if You Have:**

- A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Dizziness
- Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, cough, sore throat, body aches, or a fever
- Any new or unusual symptoms

**These guidelines are designed to help you feel your best throughout therapy. Talk to your treatment team if you have any questions or concerns.**

**Evanston Hospital: (847) 570-2590**

**Glenbrook Hospital: (847) 657-5950**

**Highland Park Hospital: (847) 480-3908**