

The Comprehensive Cancer Center's Radiation Oncology Services at Rhode Island Hospital includes pioneering physicians, unique and sophisticated technology, and experienced staff. Ours is the only hospital-based radiation oncology program in the state.

Using an array of advanced technologies, the department of radiation oncology has a proven record of superior outcomes for patients who have been diagnosed with common and uncommon cancers of every anatomical site.

Our multidisciplinary team works together to provide integrated, streamlined care for every patient.

Team members include:

- Physicians
- Medical physicists
- Dosimetrists
- Radiation therapists
- Nurses
- Nutritionists
- Social workers

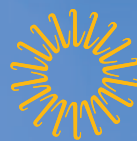
Our program works within the Comprehensive Cancer Center's multidisciplinary services to meet all of our patients' needs. We encourage patients to use free services such as patient navigation, clinical social work and complementary therapies.

As a critical member of your treatment team, it is important that you are informed and feel comfortable with your care plan. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You can reach us at 401-444-8311.

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# Radiation Therapy for Prostate Cancer



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## How is radiation therapy used for prostate cancer?

Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to kill or shrink cancer cells and to decrease their ability to divide. Radiation is often used to treat prostate cancer that is still confined to the prostate gland or has spread only to nearby tissue. If the disease is advanced, radiation may be used to reduce the size of the tumor and to provide relief from symptoms.

## What is external radiation treatment?

External radiation treatment sends high levels of radiation to the precise area of the prostate to kill cancer cells. Special shields are used to protect the tissue surrounding the treatment area. Radiation treatments are similar to X-rays in that they are painless and usually last a few minutes. External radiation therapy may be given daily for several weeks.

## What is internal radiation therapy?

This procedure uses small, radioactive seeds (each about the size of a grain of rice) that are implanted directly into the cancerous prostate tumor. The implanted seeds may be left in permanently or may be only temporary. The permanent seeds emit small amounts of radiation for a period of weeks or months. Temporary seeds use a stronger radioactive source and are put into the prostate tumor for about 10 minutes and then removed. Internal radiation therapy is usually given a few times over a couple of days.

## What are the side effects of prostate radiation therapy?

Each man's reaction to treatment differs. Some men might not experience side effects, while others may have mild to severe side effects.

Possible side effects of external radiation therapy for prostate cancer include:

- Diarrhea (with or without blood in the stool) and colitis (irritation of the large intestine)
- Problems associated with urination (more frequent urination, burning sensation, blood in urine, incontinence)
- A degree of impotence (inability to achieve or maintain an erection), which may occur within two years of radiation therapy
- Fatigue, especially during the later weeks of treatment

Possible side effects of internal radiation therapy for prostate cancer include those noted above, as well as:

- Slight bleeding soon after the seeds are placed
- Occasional loss of the seeds when urinating
- Irritation of the rectum in a small percentage of men

## What happens after my radiation therapy is complete?

Follow-up imaging is performed in the months following treatment to assess the tumor's response to the radiation. Types of imaging technology that can be used include CT, MRI and/or PET scans.

