FOLLOW UP
4–6 weeks after her last treatment, the doctor checks Beth’s side effects. Changes to her skin have become less noticeable.

CONTINUING CARE
Doctors continue to monitor Beth long term. They watch for any side effects. Beth continues to have mammograms. She exercises to maintain her wellbeing and health.

WHAT IS EXTERNAL BEAM RADIATION TREATMENT?
A machine called a linear accelerator—or ‘linac’—delivers doses of high energy rays. These rays kill remaining cancer cells in and around your breast.

HOW WILL RADIATION AFFECT ME?
Radiation will not hurt. You will not see, smell or feel the radiation beams. In fact, you will not be able to tell that you are receiving treatment. Most people continue to work, engage with others and live their normal lives while undergoing radiation treatment. Please, however, allow yourself the space to heal and rest. 2–3 weeks into treatment, side effects like skin irritation, breast tenderness and fatigue may occur. Other side effects are possible.

If you experience any side effects or notice any changes in your health, ask your doctor or nurse. They are available every day if needed.
2 Planning session
Determining the best treatment position

- Duration: 60-90 minutes
- This is also called a ‘simulation scan’
- No radiation treatment happens today
- Radiation therapists position your body for the best treatment. They make a record so they can put you in the same position every time
- For many, holding their arms above their heads is the hardest part

Be sure to speak up if you cannot hold your position. The goal is to relax in this position. This is difficult if you are uncomfortable.

Everyone’s position will be different:

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

- prone position
- breath hold
- tattoos
- marks & tape
- plane position
- heart
- lung
- breast board

3 Treatment planning
Professionals create your custom plan

- Duration: 3-10 weekdays
- Your plan targets the remaining cancer and limits the effect on healthy tissue
- Your plan is tested before it is used to treat you

4 Treatment
Visiting your clinic daily for radiation

- Duration: 15-45 minutes
- The first treatment is usually the longest
- You will visit your nurse and doctor weekly
- Some clinics check your positioning again on the first day. They may call this a ‘dry run’ or a ‘v-sim’

Today is Beth’s first day of treatment. She’s a little nervous. She notices that the treatment room has thick walls. There are also no windows into the control room. The machine moves around her.

IN THE MEANTIME

- Staying active is important to healing.
- Beth’s breast is tender and her skin is darkening. She mentions this to her care team.
- Her treatment soon feels routine.
- Bethwon’t see, smell or feel the radiation.
- Beth’s treatment may be different from Beth’s.

Plan

- Arrange transportation to the clinic
- Coordinate with work and others, so you can come to appointments and focus on healing

Prepare for treatment

- Practice arm raising exercises
- Get answers to your questions about insurance and/or billing

Seek Support

- Consider reaching out to friends, family and others
- The nurse can refer you to other services

TREATMENT

- 1-2 weeks
- Side effects

Tell your nurse and doctor if you see changes in your skin or in your overall health. They will give you instructions on skin care.

‘BOOST’

You may receive extra targeted radiation treatments called a ‘boost.’ Another planning session may be needed before these treatments.