5 After treatment
Assessing radiation’s effects on cancer and your body

- The effect of radiation is still at work in your body
- Side effects begin to subside 2–3 weeks after treatment ends
- Contact the clinic if your side effects worsen or are not improving
- You may be advised to follow a specific diet due to side effects

CONTINUING CARE
Doctors and nurses continue to monitor Helen long term. They watch for any side effects. Helen has a scan to check on the effects of the treatment. She exercises to maintain her well-being and health. She may have additional chemotherapy, surgery, or other treatments.

My Information
DOCTOR’S SKETCHPAD

Before my planning session, I need:
- a PET scan
- a CT scan
- an MRI scan
- visit dentist
- to stop medication(s)

During my planning session, I need:
- a mask
- a shave
- other

Planning my treatment:
TREATMENT
Through: I will see the: M T W Th F
Before each visit I need to: "medication/freeze" other

I will take:
- a feeding tube
- speech therapy
- tracheostomy
- a boost

Other doctors on your care team:
- Medical oncologist (chemotherapy):
- Surgeon:
- Other:

DISCUSSION GUIDE
HEAD & NECK

Helen is about to receive radiation treatment for cancer. Helen’s experience will give you an idea of what to expect. Your radiation treatment may be different.

• Consult
Understanding your radiation treatment

• Planning session
Determining the next treatment position

• Treatment planning
Your care team creates your custom plan

• Treatment
Visiting your clinic daily for radiation

• After treatment
Assessing radiation’s effects on treatment site and your body

WHAT IS EXTERNAL BEAM RADIATION TREATMENT?
A machine delivers doses of high energy rays. These rays kill cancer cells in the head and neck areas.

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.

Some people may continue to work. You may engage with others and live a normal life while undergoing radiation treatment. However, please, allow yourself the time to heal and rest.

2–3 weeks into treatment, you may experience side effects like loss of taste, voice changes, or throat pain. Other side effects are possible. Your doctor will review these with you.

If you notice any changes in your health, tell your doctor or nurse. You can talk to your care team anytime.
2 Planning session

**Determining the best treatment position**

- Duration: 60–90 minutes
- This is called a 'simulation scan'
- No radiation treatment happens today
- Radiation therapists position your head and neck for the best treatment. They will customize a mask and a mold to support you
- The therapists make notes about your position. This way they can put you in the same position for each treatment

Be sure to tell the therapist if you feel uncomfortable or if the mask is too tight. They will help you feel comfortable.

**OTHER POSSIBILITIES**

- Open with mouth guard
- Full/shoulder guard
- An IV
- Holos
- Eye shields

Your therapist may ask you to trim your hair, remove any jewelry, or remove dentures.

Helen, we’re ready for you now.

RADIATION THERAPIST

SIMULATION ROOM

We are going to make a mask and a mold. It will help keep you in the same position for all your treatments.

Helen, we’re ready for you now.

RADIATION THERAPIST

Scans are taken to customize Helen’s treatment plan.

SIMULATION ROOM

Helen’s face feels warm when they fit the mask. They put marks on her mask to help align her to the beam.

RADIATION THERAPIST

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

• an IV
• mouth guard
• Full/shoulder guard

Your therapist may ask you to trim your hair, remove any jewelry, or remove dentures.

Scans are taken to customize Helen’s treatment plan.

SIMULATION ROOM

RADIATION THERAPIST

Helen’s face feels warm when they fit the mask. They put marks on her mask to help align her to the beam.

RADIATION THERAPIST

We’ll see you on your first day of treatment.

RADIATION THERAPIST

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

• an IV
• mouth guard
• Full/shoulder guard

Your therapist may ask you to trim your hair, remove any jewelry, or remove dentures.

3 Treatment planning

Professionals create your custom plan

Your care team will use the planning scan to create your radiation treatment plan. Usually, this will take 5-7 work days. Depending on your case, it might take more time to develop your plan.

Your plan targets your tumor site around the head and neck area. It limits the radiation dose on healthy tissues.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

• bolus
• eye shields

Be sure to tell the therapist if you feel uncomfortable or if the mask is too tight. They will help you feel comfortable.

Plan

- Arrange transportation to and from the clinic
- Coordinate with your family, your job, and other people so you can come for appointments and focus on healing
- Prepare for treatment
- Get answers to your questions about insurance and/or billing
- Speak with a dietitian
- Meet with a speech therapist
- Seek support
- Consider reaching out to friends, family, and others
- Speak with a social worker
- Your nurse can refer you to other support services if needed

IN THE MEANTIME

Your plan targets your tumor site around the head and neck area. It limits the radiation dose on healthy tissues.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

• bolus
• eye shields

Be sure to tell the therapist if you feel uncomfortable or if the mask is too tight. They will help you feel comfortable.

TREATMENT ROOM

Good to see you this week

Helen. How are you?

I am losing my taste

Helen’s dietitian monitors her nutrition level.

Tell me what you ate yesterday.

Helen’s dietitian monitors her nutrition level.

Helen notices that her taste has changed. She mentions this to her care team.

WEAKLY DOCTOR VISIT

Side effects

There is a 2–3 week delay in developing side effects.

Tell your nurse and doctor if you notice any changes in your overall health. They will give you instructions on managing side effects.

Skin irritation — take care of your skin
Sore throat — clean the mouth
Dry mouth — drink water
Weight loss — eat/drink well