

External Beam Radiation Therapy: What to Expect



This handout reviews what to expect as you begin external beam radiation therapy at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center. It includes answers to some of the most common questions that patients ask. If you have any questions after reading this, please speak with your doctor or nurse.

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What you can do to get ready for radiation therapy



Watch our radiation therapy intro video

Watch this video on any computer, phone or tablet with internet access to learn how radiation works and what treatment is like. The video also answers common questions and concerns about radiation therapy.



- Try to watch the video **before** your CT simulation visit.
- To watch, go to **www.goemmi.com** and enter code: **uhradiation**
Choose your provider, enter your name and date of birth. The video is about 35 minutes. Watch as many times as you like.
- You can share this website and access code with family or friends.



Read the rest of this handout

If you wish, share this handout with family or friends. Write down your questions on the note page of this guide. Talk with your doctor or nurse to get your questions answered.

Common Questions and Answers

Where can I go for treatment?

Radiation treatment is given at many UH Seidman Cancer Center sites. However, not all treatments are available at every site, so it's best to talk to your radiation oncology doctor.

Can I drive to my treatment visits?

In most cases you can drive to your radiation treatment visits, but check with your doctor if you are unsure.

Do not drive if you are taking narcotic (opioid) pain medicines.



Where can I park?

At Cleveland Medical Center:

Park in the UH Drive Visitor Garage or use the valet at either the main entrance of Lerner Tower or the UH Seidman Cancer Center.



At our community sites:

Park in their parking lot.

Will I have to pay to park?

If you are getting radiation therapy at our Cleveland Medical Center location, we can give you a key card pass for the garage. Talk to the radiation check-in desk about this option.

There is a fee to valet park at Cleveland Medical Center.

To find out valet prices, call the Parking Office at 216-844-7275.

What if I have questions about the cost of treatment?

Our financial counselors are here to help.

To reach a financial counselor, call 1-866-771-7266.

Choose the prompt for the location where you get care.

If you have questions about a hospital bill, call 216-844-8299.



Can I eat before my treatments?

Ask your doctor or nurse if you can eat on your treatment days.

Should I take my routine medicines?

Ask your radiation doctor or nurse about what medicines you should or should not take on treatment days.



What should I bring?

- A list of your current meds. Include vitamins, herbal/natural supplements and over-the-counter meds.
- Driver's license or photo ID and insurance card.
- Items to help pass the time, such as books, word puzzles, music, tablet or laptop. WiFi is free.

What should I wear?

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Dress in layers or wear something that zips or buttons in the front. This will make it easier for you to change into a hospital gown if needed.
- Bring a jacket or sweater because sometimes it's cold in the exam and treatment areas.

Where do I check in?

At Cleveland Medical Center: check in at Radiation Oncology on the lower level (LL) of the UH Seidman Cancer Center. Enter through the revolving doors at the main entrance and take the elevators or stairs down one floor to the lower level.



For Proton Therapy: check in at the Proton Therapy Center in the basement of the Humphrey Building B800, UH Cleveland Medical Center.

At our community sites: check in at the front desk.



We need you to speak up and ask questions.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns during your treatment process.

What else do I need to know?

You will have a simulation visit before your radiation treatment begins.

The simulation visit may be called a CT sim visit for short. At this visit, you have a CT (CAT) scan. The CT scan is used to plan your treatment. It takes about 1 to 2 weeks between your CT sim visit and being scheduled for your first treatment. The first treatment visit may be a practice run where no treatment is given.

At the treatment visits, you get radiation to the area of your body that needs it. Radiation **may be given for 1 week, or many weeks**. If you have questions about your plan, talk to your doctor or nurse.



Social workers are here to help.



Our social workers are here to provide support to you and your loved ones. They can assist with day to day needs such as transportation, housing and finances.

They can provide counseling, education and referrals to community programs and support groups.

Please talk to your doctor or nurse if you would like to meet with a social worker.

Dietitians can help with nutritional needs.



Our registered dietitians can help you choose foods and drinks that are best for you. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you would like to speak with a dietitian.

You can stay active during treatment.



You can usually continue your normal daily routine while getting radiation treatments. You may feel more tired as the weeks go on. This is common. Allow yourself to rest when needed. This may continue for many weeks after therapy is completed.

What else do I need to know?

Insurance approval for treatment

Before your first treatment and any time your treatment plan changes, we find out if you need insurance pre-approval. We may also need to do this for pathology, certain labs or radiology tests like a PET scan, CT scan or MRI. This process is called **prior authorization** or **pre-certification** and it may take up to 14 days to complete. If your insurance does not pre-approve your treatment, we will let you know. We can refer you to a financial counselor, if needed.

Please note: Prior authorization isn't a promise your insurance will cover the cost. After we obtain pre-approval, your insurance may still review the claims to decide if they will pay. If your insurance refuses to pay, you have the right to appeal their decision and have it reviewed by a third party.

Access to your medical records



MyChart lets you view your University Hospitals personal health records, appointments, bills and more, all in one place. You can use MyChart on any computer, tablet or smart phone with the internet.

To get started, visit www.uhhospitals.org/mychart and click on the Sign up or Login button.

For help using MyChart, call their help line at 216-286-8960.



If you need print copies of your medical records, please speak to a member of our staff. Before your records are released, you or your legal guardian must fill out a records request form. Once the staff gets your form, it can take several days to process your request. Sometimes there is a fee to process certain records.



QUICK TIPS

You may see your test results in MyChart before your care team has had a chance to review them. After your care team reviews your results, they may share comments or feedback in your MyChart account.

CT Simulation Visit (CT Sim Visit)

This is a basic outline of what to expect at **your CT simulation visit**. At this visit, your treatment plan is created. This visit may take 1 to 2 hours.

Staff member	What will happen?
Front desk staff	• Checks you in and asks you to fill out any needed forms.
Medical Assistant (also called an MA) or Radiation Nurse	• Brings you back and gets your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and weight as needed. • Takes you to an exam room. • Gives you a hospital gown to put on if needed.
Your Radiation Nurse	• Teaches you about what will happen, helps answer your questions and puts an IV needle into your hand or arm if needed.
Your Radiation Therapist	• Explains what will happen at your visits. • Takes you to a room where you will have a CT scan done. • Takes measurements. • Positions your body in certain ways. • Marks your skin with a felt tip pen over the area that will have radiation treatment. Sometimes small tattoos, about the size of a freckle, will be used to mark your skin. The tattoos are permanent and will only be done with your OK. Do not wash off skin marks. They are needed for your treatments. • Schedules your first treatment visit.



If you have not signed a consent form for treatment before this visit, a radiation oncology doctor will review and discuss the form with you.

Treatment Days

This is a basic outline of what to expect during your treatment visits. **Your first visit may be a practice run where no radiation is given.**

Staff member	What will happen?
Front desk staff	• Checks you in and asks you to fill out any needed forms.
Medical Assistant (also called an MA) or Radiation Nurse	• Brings you back and gets your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and weight as needed. Takes you to an exam room and gives you a hospital gown to put on if needed.
Your Radiation Nurse or Radiation Therapist	• Asks questions about how you are feeling and helps answer your questions. Takes you to the radiation treatment room.
Your Radiation Therapist	• Explains the radiation treatment details. Positions you on the table of the radiation machine. • Watches you on a TV camera in another room while radiation is given. Can talk to you and hear you over a speaker system. • Comes in and out of the room to change your position as needed. Helps you off of the table when treatment is finished. • Schedules the rest of your radiation treatments. You will be alone in the room on the table, getting radiation from the machine, for about 5 to 60 minutes.
Your Radiation Doctor (also called a Radiation Oncologist)	• Sees you once every 5 treatments for an On Treatment Visit. A nurse practitioner may also see you. • Finds out how you are feeling and if any tests are needed while you are getting treatment. You must see the doctor at the weekly On Treatment Visit before your next set of radiation treatments can be scheduled.

You may also meet with a dietitian and/or social worker if needed.

Appointments and visitors



Call your doctor's office if you need to cancel or will be late for an appointment.

Missed appointments

You need to call us ahead of time if you cannot make it to your appointment. We prefer that you call us **at least 24 hours** in advance.

If you miss 3 appointments within 12 months without first calling us to cancel or reschedule, your doctor can dismiss you from their practice.

If you are running late

If you will be more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, call your doctor's office. We will try to see you, but you may have to wait longer than normal. If we cannot see you the same day, we will reschedule your appointment.



Visitors and masking

In procedure areas such as infusion, radiology and radiation, visitors under the age of 16 must be with an adult who is not the patient.

You may bring family or friends to your visits but if space is limited, we may ask some guests to wait in the lobby.

We may restrict visitors and require masks due to disease outbreaks like the flu or COVID. See www.UHhospitals.org for the current visitor and masking policy.



If you want one of our health care providers to wear a mask at any time, please ask.

How to reach your doctor's office



During normal business hours Monday through Friday

You can call your doctor's office to ask questions, report concerns and make or change appointments.

On evenings, weekends and holidays

If you or your family call during this time, our answering service will ask for your name and your doctor's name. They may take a message or page the on-call doctor and ask them to contact you. Please note that the on-call doctor may not be your doctor.

The answering service cannot access your medical record. If needed, the on-call doctor can look at your medical record.



To make, cancel or change an appointment, please call during normal business hours.



QUICK TIPS

Put your doctor's name and number in your phone or a notebook, so you have easy access to it.

To Learn More

- Speak with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.
- To view our online patient education items, visit our website at www.uhhospitals.org/seidmaneducation or scan the QR code.
- To have items mailed to you, call our Cancer Information Service Line at 216-844-5432.



Our Radiation Oncology Locations



UH Cleveland Medical Center

11100 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106
216-844-3951

UH Parma Medical Center

7007 Powers Boulevard
Parma, Ohio 44129
440-743-4749

UH Portage Medical Center

6847 North Chestnut Street
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
330-297-2338

UH Minoff Health Center

at Chagrin Highlands

3909 Orange Place
Orange Village, Ohio 44122
216-896-1750

UH Avon Health Center

2075 Healthway Drive
Avon, Ohio 44011
440-517-9000

UH Mentor Health Center

9485 Mentor Avenue, #3
Mentor, Ohio 44060
440-205-5788

My Questions and Notes



Lined area for writing questions and notes, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

