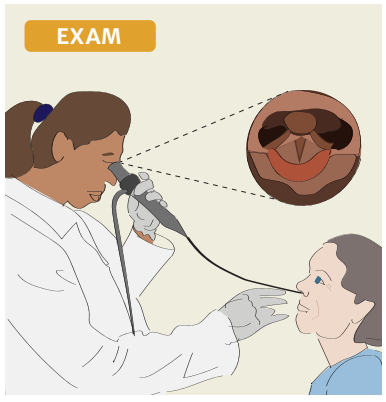
5 After treatment
Assessing radiation's effects on cancer and your body

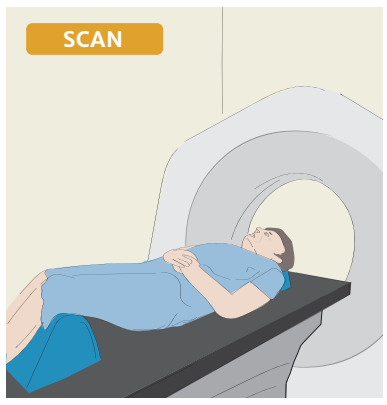
- The effect of radiation is still at work in your body
- Side effects begin to subside 2–3 weeks after treatment ends
- Contact the clinic if your side effects worsen or are not improving
- You may be advised to follow a specific diet due to side effects

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.



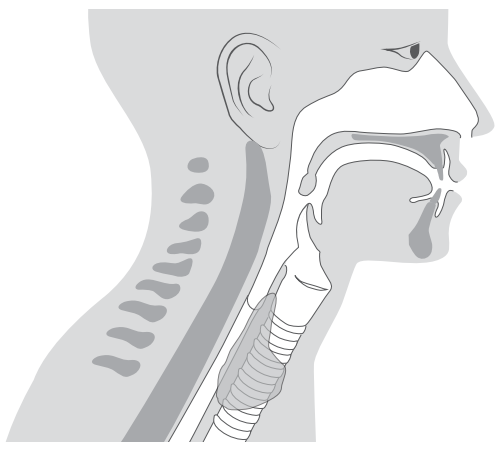


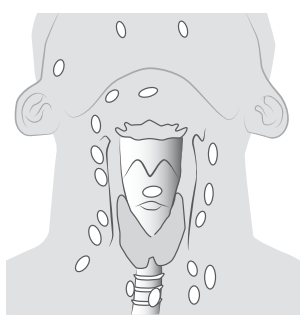
You should continue to see your doctors to ensure the cancer is going away.
Your doctors will watch for any side effects from the treatment.
You may continue to see other team members including speech therapists and dietitian.

Notes

My Information

DOCTOR'S SKETCHPAD





MY PLANNING SESSION

_____/_____ at _____:_____ am pm

Before my planning session, I need:
- ☐ a PET scan
- ☐ a CT scan
- ☐ an MRI scan
- ☐ visit dentist
- ☐ to stop medication(s) _____
- ☐ bloodwork
- ☐ get a haircut
- ☐ a shave
- ☐ limit food/drinks for ___ hours

During my planning session, I will receive:
- ☐ a mask
- ☐ marks
- ☐ other _____
- ☐ a mold
- ☐ an IV contrast

Planning my treatment will take_____ days weeks

TREATMENT INFORMATION

Throughout treatment,
I will see my doctor every **M T W Th F**

Before each visit, I need to:
- ☐ take medication(s) _____
- ☐ other _____

You may require: ☐ a feeding tube ☐ speech therapy ☐ tracheostomy ☐ a boost

MISSING APPOINTMENTS
- Contact us to reschedule
- Each missed day will be added to the end of your treatment schedule
- Long breaks between appointments could make your treatment less effective

CHEMOTHERAPY

You may receive chemotherapy along with radiation.

☐ daily (pill) ☐ every ___ week(s)

Chemotherapy may start before radiation and may continue after. You might require a 'port'.

Chemotherapy and radiation treatment have different side effects. You can contact either clinic with questions or concerns.

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

_____

Surgeon:

_____

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TREATMENT TRACKER

_____visits

(____ boost treatments)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40

This work supported in part by Speed of Light–The ASTRO Foundation.
For more information: Dr. Dan Golden info@roecsg.org
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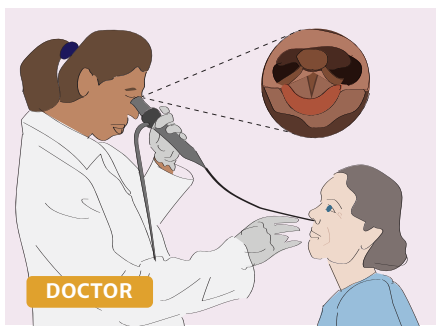
Your radiation treatment pathway

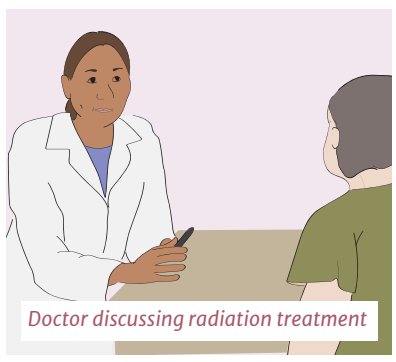
- **Consult** — Understanding your radiation treatment
- **Planning session** — Determining the best treatment position
- **Treatment planning** — Your care team creates your custom plan
- **Treatment** — Visiting your clinic daily for radiation
- **After treatment** — Assessing radiation's effects on treatment site and your body

1 Consult
Discussing radiation treatment

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.

Today, Helen is here for her first appointment. The nurse and doctor examine Helen. Helen and her care team discuss her radiation plan.




Doctor discussing radiation treatment

CARE TEAM

DOCTOR RADIATION ONCOLOGIST

NURSE

RADIATION THERAPIST

PHYSICIST

DOSIMETRIST

DIETITIAN

Other members may include Medical Assistant, Social Worker, Speech Therapist

What's the goal of my radiation treatment?

I've heard some things about radiation. Are they true?

Will the radiation affect my skin, teeth, or eyes?

What side effects are more or less likely to occur? short term? long term?

Will I be able to eat?

How long will the treatment be?

How will radiation affect my chemotherapy?

You may have to visit a dentist before the treatment starts. Your dentist may need to remove unhealthy teeth.

You may have a 'trach', or a feeding tube. These are okay to have during radiation.

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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.

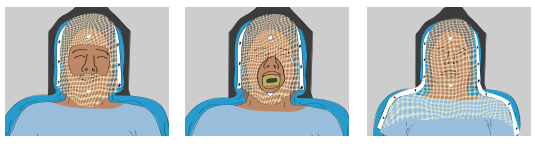
If you notice any changes in your health, tell your doctor or nurse. You can talk to your care team anytime.

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.

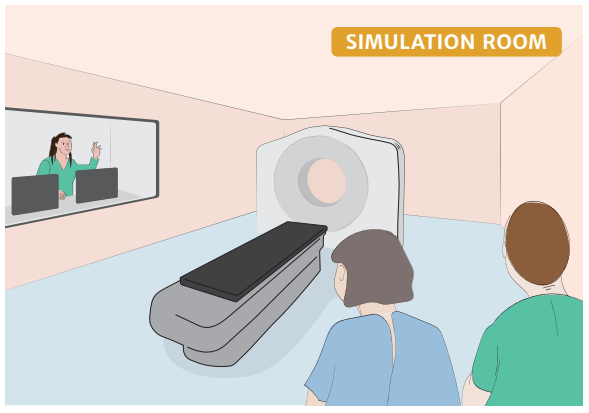
OTHER POSSIBILITIES



Open | with mouth guard | Full/shoulder

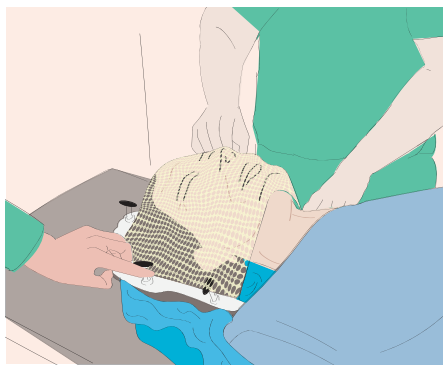
- an IV
- bolus
- eye shields

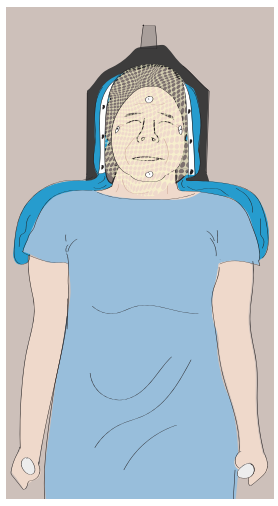
Your therapist may ask you to trim your hair, remove any jewelry, or remove dentures.



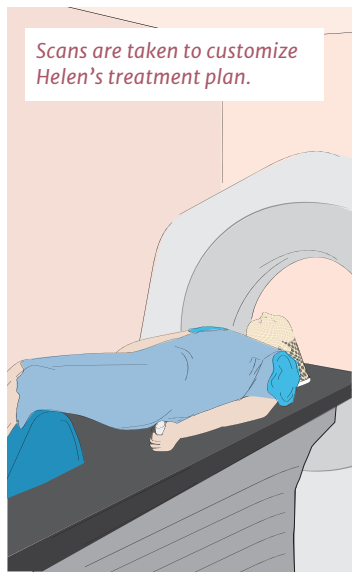
Radiation therapists position Helen with support behind her head and neck. They make a mold for her.

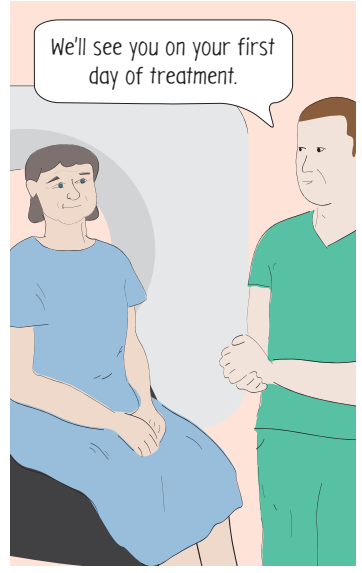
Radiation therapists also make a mask for her. Helen's face feels warm when they fit the mask. They put marks on her mask to help align her to the beam.





Scans are taken to customize Helen's treatment plan.



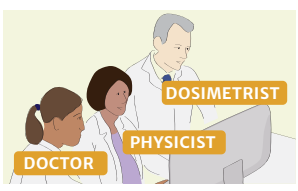


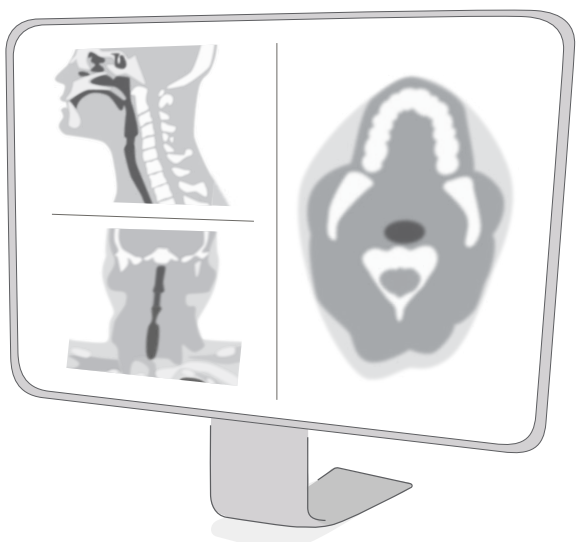
3 Treatment planning
Professionals create your custom plan

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.





IN THE MEANTIME

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

4 Treatment
Visiting your clinic daily for radiation

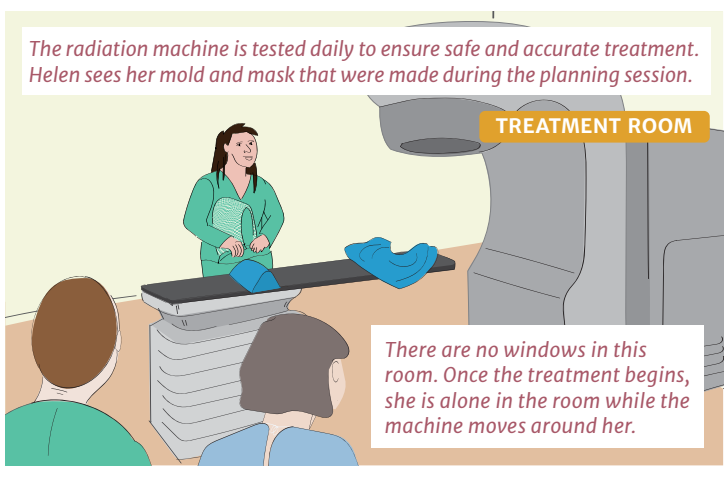
- Duration: 15–45 minutes
- The first treatment is usually longer
- You will see your doctor and nurse at least weekly

If you lose weight or the tumor shrinks a lot, you may get a new scan to adjust your treatment plan.

You might need a new mask or a new mold.

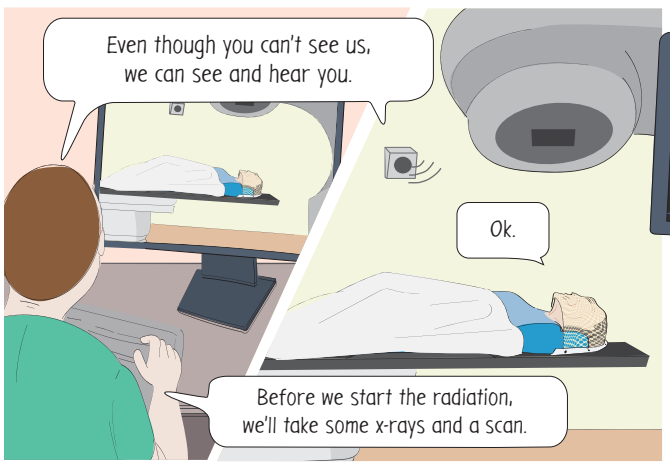
Today is Helen's first day. She is a little nervous.

She notices that the machine looks different than the scanner used in planning.

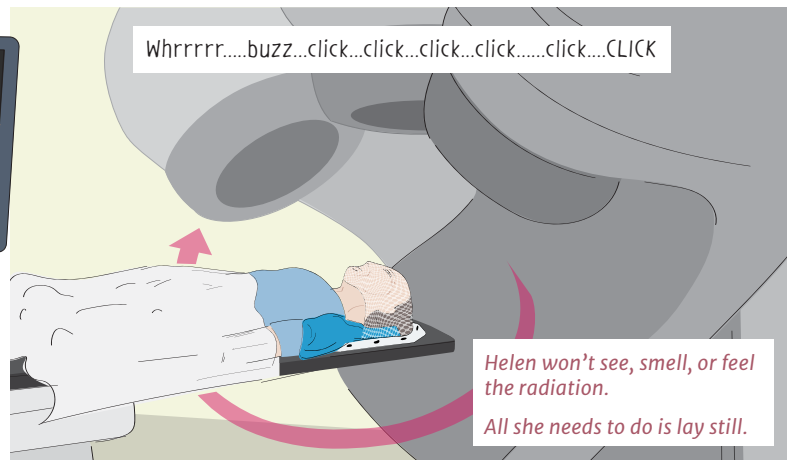


The radiation machine is tested daily to ensure safe and accurate treatment. Helen sees her mold and mask that were made during the planning session.

There are no windows in this room. Once the treatment begins, she is alone in the room while the machine moves around her.



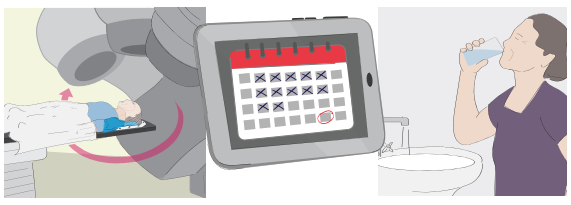
The therapists use the x-rays and scan to ensure Helen is in the right position.



Helen won't see, smell, or feel the radiation.

All she needs to do is lay still.

In between treatments, Helen goes about her day. She can safely be around her friends and family. She is not radioactive.



Her treatment soon feels routine.

Helen does regular mouth rinses.

Helen's dietitian monitors her nutrition level.

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

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

TREATMENT

1–2 weeks

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