

Radiation Therapy for **Palliative Care**



Palliative care (also known as supportive care) aims to improve the quality of life of people with serious illnesses, including cancer. Palliative care is available to people with cancer of any age or with any stage of cancer.

ASTRO

TARGETING CANCER CARE



PALLIATIVE CARE IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE

The goal of palliative care is to relieve symptoms, such as pain, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, problems with sleep, fatigue and many more. These symptoms may be caused from the cancer itself or from treatments. By improving these symptoms, we hope to improve the quality of your life.

What is the goal of palliative care?

Palliative care focuses on symptoms. The goals of care include managing pain or other issues, while supporting a person through all aspects of cancer care. The needs, values, beliefs and cultures of a person and their family are all considered when discussing palliative care.

If I am to receive palliative care, does this mean I can no longer treat my cancer?

The goal of palliative treatment is to improve the quality of your life. We do this by focusing on treatments that decrease symptoms and side effects. You may continue to receive different types of treatments intended to treat your cancer, while you are receiving palliative care.

How does palliative care differ from hospice care?

If you are receiving palliative care, you can continue receiving treatment intended to cure your cancer. People on hospice may receive palliative care. However, hospice focuses on patient's final months of life. When someone is on hospice, they are not receiving treatments intended to treat their disease. Some hospices allow patients to receive palliative treatment directed at their cancer. This includes palliative radiation for painful tumors.



Who provides palliative care?

A team of physicians, nurses, therapists, dietitians, nutritionists, counselors and social workers provides palliative care. As part of your palliative care team, your radiation oncologist will evaluate whether radiotherapy can help relieve symptoms. Radiation may be used to decrease pain or bleeding. It may even improve your breathing. A palliative medicine physician with advanced medical training may also help you when your symptoms require more medical attention.

Who benefits from palliative care?

All patients diagnosed with cancer benefit from palliative care. Even if you do not currently have symptoms, you may benefit from additional emotional support and other services for you and your caregivers.

What side effects can I expect from palliative radiation?

Side effects will vary depending on the site of radiation treatment. Ask your radiation oncologist to discuss the specific side effects from your radiation treatment.

How does radiation relieve my cancer related pain in my bones?

Cancer may spread to your bone or push on a nerve. This may cause constant pain and reduced quality of life. Radiation therapy is a non-invasive treatment to reduce the size of the tumor and improves your pain. As your need for pain medication decreases, you will have less side effects from the pain medication. Pain medication may cause constipation, nausea and fatigue. Radiation



may also be used to prevent future symptoms, such as fractures in the spine. The goal of palliative radiation therapy is to improve your functional activity and quality of life.





How many daily radiation treatments do I need to reduce my pain?

Patients often receive one palliative treatment per day for one to 10 days for their cancer. Your radiation oncologist takes into consideration many factors including the type of cancer, the location of your tumor and your physical ability to come for daily treatments.

Where can I find more resources on palliative radiation therapy?

RTAnswers.org

www.rtanswers.org/brainmets

www.rtanswers.org/bonemets

American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine

www.palliativespecialists.org

Center to Advance Palliative Care

www.getpalliativecare.org

LOCATE A RADIATION ONCOLOGIST

If you or a family member has been diagnosed with cancer, it's important to meet with several cancer specialists, including a radiation oncologist. They will help you decide on the cancer treatment or treatments that work best for you, your cancer and your lifestyle. To find a radiation oncologist in your area, visit www.rtanswers.org.



The screenshot shows the RTAnswers website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Patient Materials, Treatment Team, and Resources. Below these are links for Survivorship, Cancer Type, What Is Radiation Therapy, and Treatment Types. The main content area features a search form with the following elements:

- A dropdown menu labeled "SELECT A CANCER TYPE".
- A search bar labeled "SEARCH RTANSWERS" with a magnifying glass icon.
- A section titled "FIND A RADIATION ONCOLOGIST" with a person icon.
- Input fields for "City", "State" (with a dropdown arrow), and "Specialty" (with a dropdown arrow).
- Two green buttons: "ADVANCED SEARCH" and "SEARCH".

Below the search form, there is a green downward arrow icon and the text "June is National Cancer Survivor Month". Underneath this is a video player showing a medical professional attending to a patient in a radiation therapy machine. Below the video, there is a paragraph of text:

June is National Cancer Survivor Month. Whether you are newly diagnosed, in treatment or have completed your treatment decades ago, you are a survivor. Visit the [Patient Stories](#) section of this site read stories from patients and caregivers, or [share your story](#).

At the bottom of the page, there are three small image thumbnails with captions:

- A photo of an elderly couple embracing, captioned "SURVIVORSHIP".
- A photo of a diverse group of people smiling, captioned "SHARE YOUR STORY".
- A photo of a doctor talking to a patient, captioned "QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR".

Visit
www.rtanswers.org
to learn more about
radiation therapy
for cancer.



ABOUT THE RADIATION ONCOLOGY TEAM

Radiation oncologists are doctors who specialize in the use of radiation therapy as a treatment for cancer. Other members of the treatment team include radiation therapists, radiation oncology nurses, medical physicists, dosimetrists, social workers and nutritionists. For information on what each does or to find a radiation oncologist near you, visit www.rtanswers.org.

ABOUT ASTRO

The American Society for Radiation Oncology is the largest radiation oncology society in the world with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating cancer with radiation therapies. ASTRO is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, advancement of science and advocacy. Visit www.astro.org for more information.

