

Radiation Treatment to the Pelvis

This information is designed to supplement the handout *Radiation Treatment: Questions and Answers*. If you have not received a copy, please ask your nurse.

Your doctor may recommend that you receive radiation treatment with chemotherapy. The purpose of this treatment is to shrink the tumor before surgery and destroy any cancer cells that may have spread from the tumor to the surrounding area. As a result, the surgeon can remove the remaining tumor more easily and possibly reduce the need for more extensive surgery.

Pretreatment Simulation

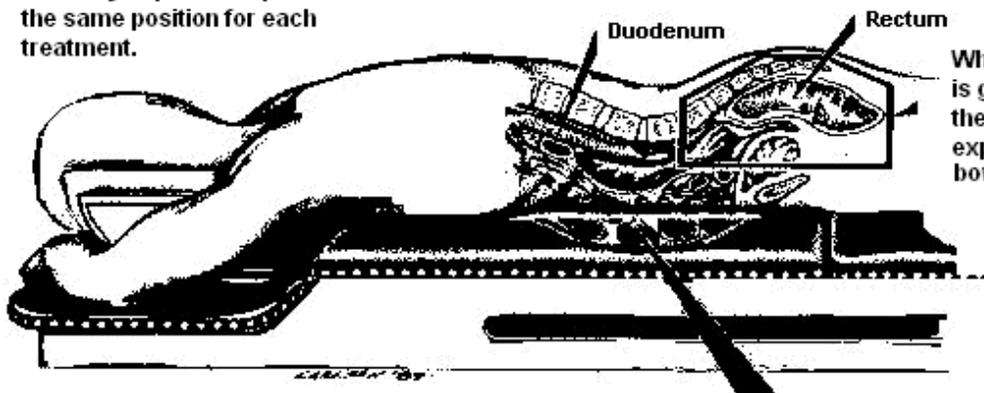
You will receive an appointment for a simulation. This is a procedure to determine and mark the area of treatment. Simulation involves taking X-rays of your pelvis (hip area) and marking the skin on your hips and lower back with a colored pen. No preparation or special diet is required before the simulation. The procedure is painless. However, you will have to lie face down on a special table for at least one hour. Your arms will rest on a pad around your head and they may get tired.

Placement of Patient During Simulation

Inset: Demonstrating open table top



Face mask and arm support increase patient comfort and reliability to place the patient in the same position for each treatment.



When radiation treatment is given from the side, there is less radiation exposure to the small bowel.

When lying on your stomach, the opening in the table will allow your belly to drop beneath the level of the table top.

You may need to drink a small glass of barium one hour before the simulation. Barium is a chalky, liquid drink that helps make your intestines more visible on an X-ray. It takes one hour for the barium to reach the intestines after you swallow it.

Barium is not absorbed by the intestines and will pass out of the body. Since small amounts of barium are used, constipation is usually not a problem. You should drink several glasses of water after the simulation to help with normal bowel movements. If you do have a problem with constipation, take two tablespoons of milk of magnesia.

A soft flexible tube called a catheter will be passed through your anal opening so that your doctor can locate your anal sphincter. Your anal sphincter is the muscle in the rectum that controls your bowel movements.

Special X-ray films will be taken during the simulation so the radiation can be targeted on the tumor area. Customized lead blocks will be made to cover and protect areas of your body that do not require treatment.

During the simulation, the technician will make a contour of your pelvis using a small strip of plaster. This contour will be used to design a computerized treatment plan for you. This preparation will be done at least two working days before your treatment begins.

Radiation Treatment

A special table top has been designed for your radiation treatment. See the diagram on the previous page, noting the opening toward the top. You will lie down on the table with your hips resting on the bottom of the opening. Your belly will drop beneath the level of the table top. This helps to move the small intestines away from the radiation area. The treatment is given to the back and sides of the pelvis. This method helps decrease possible side effects.

Your radiation treatment will be given daily. The therapist at your radiation machine will assist you with any questions about your treatment schedule.