

CANCER INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

IMRT INSTRUCTIONS FOR HEAD AND NECK

Many patients will be referred for a Dental Oncology Consult with Dr. Nelson Lowe. This should be done prior to your next radiation oncology appointment.

If your Radiation Oncologist recommends the use of mouthpieces for the daily radiation treatment, please bring them to your simulation appointment. Prior to your simulation appointment you may try wearing the custom made mouthpieces while lying on your back, for 15-30 minutes. If you are unable to tolerate this position with mouthpieces in place, please notify Dr. Lowe and inform the simulation therapist before your next appointment.

Simulation (1st appointment):

- **Please bring any mouthpieces that have been made for you to the Simulation appointment. Without the prescribed mouthpieces, we will not be able to make the mask or do the required CT scan.** The mouthpieces will then stay here in the Radiation Oncology department so they are available for all future appointments.
- The initial Simulation will consist of: Signing of consents, mask formation, and a quick CT scan in the treatment position while wearing the mask and any mouthpieces that have been made for you. The CT scan is for treatment planning purposes so your physician and our physics staff may develop the optimum treatment plan for you.
- The main purpose of the mask is to hold you in the proper position required for the high accuracy necessitated by IMRT treatments. It also allows us to draw localization marks on the mask instead of on your skin. This will be used for all treatment and set-up appointments.
- The mask is made by putting a thermoplastic mesh in warm water and forming it to your face. The mask goes over the head, face, neck, and upper chest but is much like a fishnet with many holes for breathing. The mask then solidifies into a custom made positioning device for you to wear for each treatment.
- The amount of time it takes for mask formation and the CT scan is on the order of 15 minutes. **You will be lying on your back for the mask formation and all subsequent appointments.**

Treatment Planning

Treatment planning of IMRT Tomotherapy head and neck treatment is a process that takes a minimum of two weeks. It takes many hours for the dosimetrists, physicists, and your physician to devise the optimum plan for your particular case.

Treatment Set-up (2nd Appointment):

- Quality assurance checks must be done by the physicist on the actual treatment machine for each segment of your treatment, to be verified prior to the start of treatment. **You should plan to be here 15-30 minutes.**

CANCER INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

Daily Treatment:

- Treatment will usually commence the next day and will take between 35-45 minutes. Again, you will be lying on your back with the mouthpieces inserted while wearing the mask.
- **If you think wearing the mask for this length of time will cause anxiety for you, please discuss possible pre-medication with your doctor before you start treatment.** This will allow time for you to obtain the prescribed medication from your pharmacy. This will avoid any delays starting treatment.