

The Comprehensive Cancer Center's Radiation Oncology Services at Rhode Island Hospital includes pioneering physicians, unique and sophisticated technology, and experienced staff. Ours is the only hospital-based radiation oncology program in the state.

Using an array of advanced technologies, the department of radiation oncology has a proven record of superior outcomes for patients who have been diagnosed with common and uncommon cancers of every anatomical site.

Our multidisciplinary team works together to provide integrated, streamlined care for every patient.

Team members include:

- Physicians
- Medical physicists
- Dosimetrists
- Radiation therapists
- Nurses
- Nutritionists
- Social workers

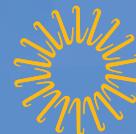
Our program works within the Comprehensive Cancer Center's multidisciplinary services to meet all of our patients' needs. We encourage patients to use free services such as patient navigation, clinical social work and complementary therapies.

As a critical member of your treatment team, it is important that you are informed and feel comfortable with your care plan. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You can reach us at 401-444-8311.

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# Radiation Therapy for Gastrointestinal Cancer



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## How is radiation therapy used?

Radiation therapy, also called radiotherapy, works by directing high energy X-rays at a tumor in the gastrointestinal tract. Examples of tumors in the gastrointestinal tract include esophageal cancers, pancreatic cancer, cholangiocarcinoma, liver cancers, stomach cancers, and colon and rectal cancers. The radiation therapy destroys cancer cells. A radiation oncologist will create a treatment plan for you. Each person's treatment plan is different and will include the type of radiation and how often and for how long you will have the treatment.

## When is radiation therapy an option?

Radiation therapy can help treat cancers of the digestive system in several ways:

- It can shrink the cancer before surgery. For this goal, it is often used with anti-cancer drugs, also known as chemotherapy. This may help to make the surgery easier.
- It can destroy any cancer cells that remain after surgery. For this goal, it is often used with anti-cancer drugs, also known as chemotherapy.
- It can shrink cancer to relieve symptoms of advanced cancer. This may help lessen pain, bleeding, or trouble eating.

## What types of radiotherapy are used?

The type of radiotherapy most often used to treat the digestive system is external beam radiation therapy (ERBT). ERBT sends radiation from a large X-ray machine outside the body. It is like getting an X-ray, except that it lasts longer.

EBRT is often given with one of two advanced radiation methods: three-dimensional conformal radiation therapy (3D-CRT) or intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT). Both 3D-CRT and IMRT use a CT scan of your anatomy to aim radiation from several directions. These types of advanced radiation planning can lessen the side effects on healthy tissue.

## What are the side effects of radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy affects normal cells, as well as cancer cells. This can cause side effects, which depend on the amount and type of radiation. Side effects may include but are not limited to:

- Irritation of the skin near the treatment area
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea or intestinal cramping
- Feeling tired
- Temporary pain or burning sensation with swallowing

Talk with your doctor about any side effects. He or she may be able to help lessen them.

## Where will treatment occur and how long will it take?

You will receive radiation treatment at Rhode Island Hospital. You will likely not have to stay overnight. You may receive treatment 5 days a week. This may last for as few as one or up to seven weeks. The length of time depends on the type and dose of radiation advised by your radiation oncologist. Your radiation oncologist or nurse can tell you what to expect during and after treatment.

