

放射治療

Understanding

# Radiotherapy



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CANCERFUND

# Hong Kong Cancer Fund

Hong Kong Cancer Fund was established in 1987 to provide support, information and care to those living with cancer and to increase awareness and knowledge of cancer in our community.

Our CancerLink Care Centres offer professional support and connect various cancer patient support groups to form an extensive support network for cancer patients and families, offering emotional support and practical assistance to those touched by cancer.

This publication is one in a series of cancer information booklets which discuss different aspects of the disease, including possible treatment, side effects and emotional issues. They are intended to inform the public about available treatment and care. You can also download the information from our website: [www.cancer-fund.org](http://www.cancer-fund.org).

The free services offered by Hong Kong Cancer Fund are made possible only because of donation from the public. If you would like to show your support and concern for cancer patients, please feel free to contact us. Your generosity will directly benefit cancer patients in Hong Kong. You can also use our donation form at the back of this booklet to make your contribution.

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CancerLink Hotline : 3656 0800

### **Or visit our website :**

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## **Hong Kong Cancer Fund**

Suite 2501, Kinwick Centre, 32 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong

Tel : 2868 0780 Fax : 2524 9023 Email : [public@hkcf.org](mailto:public@hkcf.org)

## **CancerLink Central**

Unit 3, G/F., The Center, 99 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong.

Tel : 3667 3000 Fax : 3667 3100 Email: [canlinkcentral@hkcf.org](mailto:canlinkcentral@hkcf.org)

## **CancerLink Wong Tai Sin**

Unit 2-8, Wing C, G/F., Lung Cheong House, Lower Wong Tai Sin (II) Estate

Kowloon, Hong Kong

Tel : 3656 0700 Fax : 3656 0900 Email: [canlink@hkcf.org](mailto:canlink@hkcf.org)

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# Introduction

This booklet has been prepared to help you understand more about radiotherapy, one of the main types of treatment for cancer.

Understanding radiotherapy may help you cope better and assist you in making decisions about treatment.

We cannot advise about the best treatment for you. You need to discuss this with your own doctors. However, we hope this information will answer some of your questions and help you think about the questions you want to ask your doctors.

If you find this booklet helpful, pass it on to your family and friends, who may also find it useful.

The booklet does not need to be read from cover to cover, but can be read in sections according to your needs or interests.



# What is Cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the cells, which are the body's basic building blocks. Cancer starts in our genes. Our bodies constantly make new cells: to enable us to grow, to replace worn-out cells, or to heal damaged cells after an injury. Certain genes control this process, helping cells grow and multiply in an orderly way.

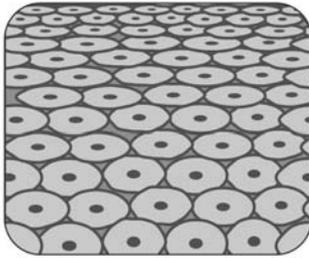
If these genes are damaged, cells can grow abnormally. This is cancer. The cause of cancer is usually unknown. This damage usually happens during our lifetime, although a small number of people inherit a damaged gene from a parent. Damaged genes may grow into a lump called a tumour.

Tumours can be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer). Benign tumours do not spread outside their normal boundary to other parts of the body.

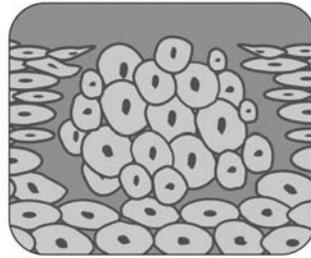
A malignant tumour is made up of cancer cells. When it first develops, this malignant tumour may be confined to its original site. This is known as a cancer in situ (or carcinoma in situ). If these cells are not treated, they may spread beyond their normal boundaries and into surrounding tissues, becoming invasive cancer.

Some benign tumours are pre-cancerous and may progress to

cancer if left untreated. Other benign tumours do not develop into cancer.



Normal cells



Cells forming a tumour

## How Cancer Spreads?

For a cancer to grow bigger than the head of a pin, it must grow its own blood vessels. This is called angiogenesis. Sometimes cells move away from the original (primary) cancer, either by the local tissue fluid channels (lymphatics) or in the blood stream, and invade other organs. When these cells reach a new site, they may continue to grow and form another tumour at that site. This is called a secondary cancer or metastasis.



# Radiotherapy explained

Radiotherapy is one of the main types of treatment for cancer.

Radiotherapy can produce different reactions in different people. Reactions may vary from one treatment period to the next. However, many side effects can be controlled or reduced.

Other treatment options for cancer include:

- Chemotherapy
- Surgery
- Immunotherapy
- Hormone therapy

Many cancers can be cured or controlled using these treatments, either alone or in combination.

When a cure is unlikely, chemotherapy and radiotherapy can relieve symptoms and help you feel as comfortable as possible. This is called palliative treatment.

## What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy uses radiation to kill cancer cells or injure them so they cannot multiply. Radiotherapy can be used to treat the original (primary) and to treat the symptoms of advanced cancer.

While radiation will affect all cells, normal cells are better able than cancer cells to resist or recover from its effects.

- Radiotherapy will not leave you radioactive.
- The treatments do not hurt.
- The radiation is not hot.
- You will not see or feel the rays, just as you do not see or feel anything when you have an ordinary x-ray.

## Why radiotherapy is used?

### ■ *To cure cancer*

Many cancers can be cured by radiotherapy on its own or combined with other treatments.

### ■ *To control cancer*

If a cure is not possible, radiotherapy may keep the cancer under control for some time by making it smaller or stopping them from spreading.

## ■ *To relieve symptoms*

Sometimes it is not possible to control cancer. Radiotherapy may be used to relieve cancer symptoms and make life more comfortable. For instance, if radiotherapy can make the cancer smaller, this may relieve pain or bleeding. This is called palliative treatment, because the aim is to relieve the symptoms rather than to cure the cancer.

## ■ *To help other treatments*

While radiotherapy may be your main treatment, it may also be used to assist another treatment. This is called adjuvant radiotherapy.

Adjuvant radiotherapy may be used before your main treatment to make a cancer tumour smaller so the main treatment can be more effective. Or it may be used after the main treatment to stop the growth of remaining cancer cells. In some cases, radiotherapy is used in conjunction with chemotherapy to treat the cancer. Different treatments may be done at different clinics or hospitals.

## How is radiotherapy given?

Radiotherapy can be given in two ways: from outside (external) or inside the body (internal).

In some cases, a combination of both forms of radiotherapy may be used.



# External Radiotherapy

In external radiotherapy, a machine directs radiation at the cancer and surrounding tissue. Different machines may be used: some are better for treating cancers near the skin, others are better for cancers deeper in the body. The radiation oncologist will choose the best machine to treat your cancer.

## How long is a course of treatment?

Different people need different numbers of radiotherapy treatments. While some people need only one or a few treatments, usually people need radiotherapy five days a week for several weeks.

Using many small doses of daily radiation rather than a few large doses helps protect normal body tissues in the treatment area. Weekend rest breaks allow normal cells to recover.

Each dose of radiation causes a little more damage to cancer cells, so it is important to attend all your treatments to ensure you receive enough radiation to eventually kill the cancer cells. You may not notice any benefit until some time after the treatment finishes.

## Planning the treatment

Your treatment will depend on the following:

- What sort of cancer you have
- Where it is
- How large it is
- Your general health
- Any other cancer treatments you have had

Your first appointment at the radiotherapy department will be a planning session.

Your treatment must be planned in detail to ensure that enough radiation reaches the cancer but does as little damage as possible to the surrounding tissues.

### ■ *Planning Procedures*

1. **Examination:** Your radiation oncologist will examine you and may ask for further x-rays and other tests to find out more about your tumour. The radiation oncologist will then decide which part of the body to treat and how much radiation to use -- that is, the dose of radiation you will have.
2. **Simulator:** A special x-ray machine called a simulator is often used to precisely pinpoint the area of the body to be treat-

ed. This is like having ordinary x-rays but may take a little longer. You may also have another special x-ray called a computerised tomography (CT) scan.

3. **Moulds and casts:** Depending on the type of treatment you will be receiving, special support devices may be made to help you stay still during treatment and to make sure the treatment is directed at the same place each time.

Some of these devices are made to lie on. Others, in the case of treatment for the head and neck area, are light-weight casts that are put over the area to be treated. These casts show where the radiation is to be directed, rather than marking directly onto your skin.

4. **Skin marking:** The doctor or radiation therapist may mark your skin with special ink or marker pens to make sure the radiation is directed at the same place on your body each time. Sometimes these non-permanent marks need to be redone during the course of the treatment.

It is important you do not wash off the ink until your full course of treatment is finished. If it fades, your radiation therapist will darken it. The ink will gradually wear off after your treatment is finished.

Another option is very small permanent marks. These small, black ‘tattoos’ are about the size of a pinhead. The radiation therapist or doctor will explain the marks and ask your permission before the procedure is carried out.

## What happens during treatment?

You will probably be asked to change into a hospital gown and you will be taken into a special treatment room. You might be in there for 15 or 30 minutes, although you will only get radiation for about one to five minutes of that time, depending on the dose the doctor has prescribed.

The radiation therapist will settle you on the treatment table or in a chair. If you have had a special support device made, it will be used during your treatment.

The therapist will spend a little time getting the machines in exactly the right place and checking all the required steps.

Special shields made of lead may be placed between certain parts of your body and the machine to help protect your normal tissues or organs (radiation cannot pass through lead).

The machines used for radiation treatment are very large. They may also make noises like a vacuum cleaner as they move around to aim at the cancer from different angles. The machines are always under the radiation therapist’s control,

and you will not hear or see the rays.

Once everything is in place, the radiation therapist will go to a nearby room to turn on the machine. You will be alone in the room, but you can still talk with the radiation therapist through an intercom, and he or she will watch you all the time on a television screen or through a window.

You may breathe normally during treatment but it is important for you to stay very still while the machine is working. Some people may need treatment from several different angles, so the radiation therapist will move you or the machine before repeating the procedure. The radiation therapist will tell you when it is time to move.

You should not feel any discomfort. If you are concerned or anxious at any stage, or if you feel unwell, always request the radiation therapist to explain or help.

While you are having your course of treatments, your doctor will watch over your progress, checking the cancer's response to treatment and your overall well-being. This may involve physical examinations, blood tests, scans and x-rays.

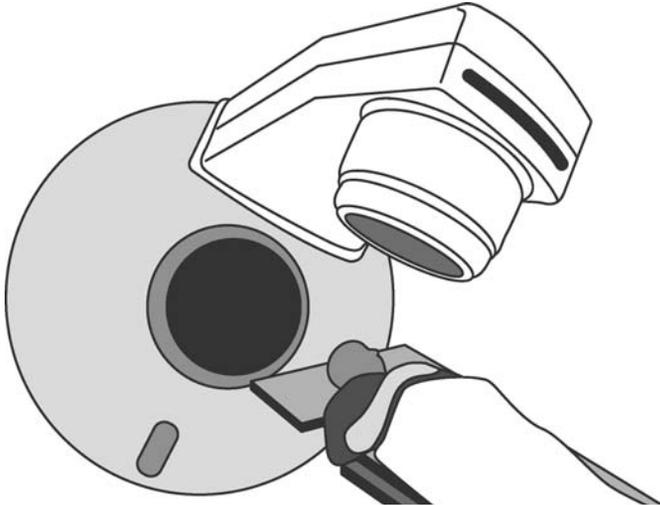
## Does it hurt?

No, it does not hurt. You will not see or hear the radiation and you should not feel any discomfort during the treatment. If you

feel ill or uncomfortable during treatment, tell your radiation therapist immediately.

## Will I be radioactive?

No. External radiotherapy does not make you radioactive. It is safe to be with other people in the period when you are having treatment and afterwards. You will not hear or see the rays.





# Internal Radiotherapy (Brachytherapy)

In internal radiotherapy, the radioactive material is placed inside the body, on or near the cancer. This treatment is also known as brachytherapy.

The radioactive material sealed in a small holder is called an implant. Implants may be thin tubes, needles, seeds, capsules or rods. The type of implant depends on the type of cancer you have.

Radiotherapy with implants is most commonly used to treat cancers of the mouth, neck, uterus, vagina, rectum, cervix and prostate.

Your doctor may recommend internal radiotherapy alone, or combined with external radiotherapy.

## How is the implant placed in the body?

You may need to be admitted to hospital and have the implant put into your body while you are under general anaesthetic.

Implants come in different shapes and can contain different radioactive materials. In some cases, the doctor may use a

special applicator to hold the implant against the surface of the tumour.

## How long will it be there?

Most implants are left in place from one to six days and you are likely to stay in hospital for this time. With some cancers, the implant may be in place for only a few minutes while others are left in place permanently.

An implant can also be used to deliver radiation very quickly over a few minutes. This can be an outpatient treatment, which may need to be repeated.

## Will I be radioactive?

While your radioactive implant is in place, it may send some radiation outside your body into the surrounding area. For this reason, hospitals protect others staff from receiving too much radiation in various ways:

- You may be nursed alone, in a room away from the main ward.
- The doctors, nurses and other staff on the ward will only stay in your room for short periods of time.
- Visitors may be limited while your implant is in place.

- Most hospitals do not allow children under 18 or pregnant women to visit people who have implants.
- If you have a permanent implant, you may need to stay in an isolated room for the first few days while the radiation is most active. The implant becomes less radioactive as days pass by. By the time you are ready to go home, the radiation in your body will be weak and it will be safe to be with others.
- You will be able to talk to hospital staff and visitors outside the room through an intercom.

Once the implant is removed, all radioactivity is removed from you - that is, you are not radioactive and there is no danger to anyone else.

## Will the implant hurt?

You might experience a little discomfort, but you should not have any severe pain or feel ill during implant therapy. If your implant is held in place by an applicator, it may be uncomfortable. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to relax you and relieve any pain.

You may be sore or sensitive in the treated area for some time after your implant has been removed. In some cases, your doctor might advise you to limit physical and sexual activity for a while.



# Managing side effects

Radiotherapy is an effective treatment for many cancers, but it can cause unwanted side effects.

Side effects usually start around the second or third week of treatment and are at their worst two-thirds of the way through treatment. Fortunately, most side effects will go away in time and there are ways to reduce the discomfort they may cause.

Side effects vary:

- from person to person - some people will have no side effects, others will experience a few
- from the areas of the body being treated
- from one treatment period to the next

The type and severity of your side effects have nothing to do with the success of your treatment.

## Helping yourself during radiotherapy

- Talk to your radiation oncologist about possible side effects.

Before your treatment begins ask your doctor about the

expected short term and long-term side effects.

- Tell your radiation oncologist or nurse of any side effects.

If you have a particularly severe side effect, the doctor may prescribe a break in your treatments or change your treatment.

- Ask your radiation oncologist if you can take any medicines, creams, home remedies or alternative or complementary therapies. Some of these remedies can affect how radiotherapy works in your body.

## Side Effects and Tips

### Common side effects

- Feeling tired and lacking energy
- Skin problems
- Hair loss
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and diarrhoea
- Face, mouth, neck and upper chest problems
- Dental problems
- Fertility problems

## 1. Feeling tired and lacking energy



During radiotherapy, your body uses a lot of energy to deal with the effects of radiation on normal cells. Some people are able to carry on as usual, but many people find they cannot do as much and feel tired during and after treatment. Your weakness and weariness may build up slowly during the course of treatment but should go away gradually after treatment is over.

### Tips

- ✓ Save your energy. Help your body by doing less and doing restful things in your leisure time.
- ✓ Try to get more sleep at night and take naps during the day if you can.
- ✓ Let other people help you. Family members, neighbours and friends may be glad to have a chance to help you with tasks like shopping, child-care, housework and driving.
- ✓ Take a few weeks off work during or after your radiotherapy, or work fewer hours. Maybe you can do some of your work

at home. Some people feel well enough to continue to work full time if their treatment appointments can be organised to suit their work hours.

## 2. Skin problems

Radiotherapy may make your skin dry and itchy in the treatment area. Some of the radiation passes into your body and out through the skin, so the skin may also be affected, although probably not as much.

You may temporarily develop a sunburnt look - such as redness, tanning or burning - in the treated area.

### Tips

- ✓ Wear soft clothing. Some of the dye marks may rub off on your clothes, so it is best to wear loose and comfortable older clothes that you can throw out if they get stained.
- ✓ Avoid wearing tight clothes such as girdles or close-fitting collars that may irritate the skin.
- ✓ Protect the treatment area from the sun. Stay out of the sun and, before going outdoors, always cover your treated skin with light, close-weave clothing. Ask your doctor about using a sunscreen (SPF 30+).

- ✓ Tell your doctor about changes in your skin, such as cracks or blisters, very moist skin, rashes, infections or peeling, or any changes in your nails.
- ✓ Do not rub, scrub or scratch treated skin or any sensitive spots. Let the dye outlines after your treatment wear off gradually.
- ✓ Avoid using any soaps, creams, deodorants, medicines, perfumes, cosmetics, talcum powder or other substances on the treatment area without your doctor's approval. Many products leave a coating that can interfere with radiotherapy.
- ✓ Bath or shower in lukewarm water - hot water can injure your sensitive skin. Pat skin dry with a soft towel. Do not put very hot or cold things (hot-water bottle, ice pack, etc...) on the treatment area.
- ✓ Do not use a blade razor on the treatment area. Check with your doctor or nurse before using an electric razor.

### 3. Hair loss

If you have hair in the area being treated (scalp, face or body), you may lose some or all of it during radiotherapy. Usually it will grow back and return to normal after the treatments are finished. You will not lose hair outside the treated area.

## Tips

- ✓ Wear a wig, hat, scarf or turban. Do whatever feels comfortable and gives you the most confidence.
- ✓ If you plan to buy a wig, it is a good idea to choose it early in your therapy so you can match the colour and style of your own hair.
- ✓ If you prefer to leave your head bald, protect it against sunburn or extreme cold.
- ✓ Expect the hair that first grows back to be a little different. It might, for instance, be curly although you have always had straight hair. In some people, it will be a little thinner and, occasionally after a large dose of radiotherapy, the new growth can be patchy for a while.
- ✓ Look after your scalp the same way as other treatment areas anywhere else on your body.
- ✓ Ask your hairdresser to make your hair look as good as possible even if it is thin or patchy. In time, your hair will probably return to its normal condition and you can resume your usual hair care routine.

## 4. Loss of appetite

Eating healthy and varied food is important when you are being treated for cancer so that you can remain as well as possible and get the most from your treatment.



Depending on the site of your treatment, you may lose your normal interest in food during your course of radiotherapy. Even when you know that eating properly is important, there may be days when you cannot eat much.

### Tips

- ✓ Eat smaller amounts but more often.
- ✓ Try to catch up on days when you do feel like eating.
- ✓ You may find that you can drink a lot, even if you do not feel like eating solid foods. If so, try enriching your drinks with powdered milk, low-fat yoghurt, eggs, honey or weight-gain supplements. The hospital dietitian will also be able to help if you have problems with food.

If you have radiotherapy in the head and neck area, chewing or swallowing might be difficult or painful.

## 5. Nausea and diarrhoea

If you have radiotherapy to your stomach or part of your lower abdomen, you may have to cope with an upset stomach or diarrhoea.

These problems will go away when your treatment is over.

### Tips

- ✓ Ask your radiation oncologist to prescribe medicine to relieve diarrhoea.
- ✓ Check with your radiation oncologist, radiation therapist or nurse before taking any home remedies during your radiotherapy treatment.
- ✓ Eat nothing or only a bland snack such as toast, dry biscuits or apple juice for a few hours before your treatment. If the problem persists, you can ask your doctor for medicine to prevent nausea.
- ✓ Try having nothing but clear liquids as soon as diarrhoea starts, or when you feel it is going to start. Liquids that will not make your diarrhoea worse include apple juice, peach nectar, weak tea and clear broth.

After the diarrhoea has cleared up, it is important to return to a healthy eating plan that includes fresh fruits and vegetables and

wholegrain breads and pasta.

## 6. Face, mouth, neck and upper chest problems

Radiotherapy is often used to treat cancers in the face, mouth, neck and upper chest and can bring excellent results. Depending on the area treated, it can affect your mouth and teeth, making eating difficult.

After about two weeks of treatment, your mouth or throat may become dry and sore and your voice may become hoarse. This should start to improve after another two or three weeks and is usually gone about a month after treatment finishes. You might also have some phlegm in your throat, or a lump-like feeling that makes it hard to swallow.

### Tips

- ✓ Suck ice chips and sip cool drinks.
- ✓ Avoid tobacco and alcohol (including mouthwashes containing alcohol) because they will dry your mouth even more.
- ✓ Ask your doctor or nurse for information on artificial saliva preparations.
- ✓ If eating is uncomfortable or painful, ask your doctor for something to relieve the pain.

- ✓ Try to have more liquids or soft food if chewing and swallowing are painful.
- ✓ Your doctor may advise you to try a diet supplement. You can buy these at a pharmacy without a prescription and many are available in a variety of flavours. You can use them alone or with other foods, such as pureed fruit.
- ✓ If your sense of taste changes during radiotherapy, try different ways of preparing food. For example, lemon juice makes many foods, including meat and vegetables, tastier.

Your doctor can help you with these problems or see a speech pathologist if you continue to have difficulties swallowing.

## 7. Dental problems

If you are having radiotherapy to your mouth, your teeth will be more likely to decay. If possible, discuss dental care with your doctor before treatment starts, and tell your dentist about your treatment, so that the doctor and dentist can discuss any dental work you need before radiotherapy begins.

Your dentist will probably want to see you often during your radiotherapy. He or she will give you detailed instructions about caring for your mouth and teeth, to help prevent tooth decay and to deal with problems such as mouth sores.

## 8. Fertility problems

Having radiotherapy in areas near your reproductive organs can affect sexual organs and functioning in both women and men. This may have a temporary or permanent effect on your ability to have children (fertility). It is best for you and your partner to talk about these issues with your doctor.

### ***a. For women***

Radiotherapy to the pelvic area may cause periods to become irregular for a short time or to stop completely (menopause). After menopause, women can not have children. The signs of menopause include hot flushes, sweating, particularly at night, and dry skin. Talk to your doctor about medication for relieving symptoms of menopause. Early menopause (between the ages of 45 and 55) may cause bones to become weaker and break more easily. This is called osteoporosis.

Your gynaecologist and radiation oncologist will work closely together to try to keep radiation away from the ovaries. But it is difficult to protect from radiation because their position is uncertain and they are often in the area that needs treating. Storage of eggs (ova) before treatment is an option but it is still experimental.

### ***b. For men***

Radiotherapy to an area that includes the testes may reduce sperm production temporarily or permanently. If you want to

father a child, you may consider having sperm stored before your treatment starts so that artificial insemination will be possible later. If the testes are outside the treatment area, they can usually be protected from the radiation.

### ***c. Contraception during treatment***

Although radiotherapy reduces fertility, it is possible for some women to become pregnant while having radiotherapy and a man having radiotherapy could make his partner pregnant.

Pregnancy should be avoided during radiotherapy just in case the x-rays might harm the eggs (ova) before conception or the unborn baby. Radiotherapy to a man may cause him to produce abnormal sperm.

You and your partner are strongly advised to use contraception if pregnancy is a possibility. If you or your partner become pregnant, talk to your doctor urgently.

### ***d. What about my sex life?***

Men and women usually find that radiotherapy to the pelvic area causes sexual intercourse to become temporarily uncomfortable and undesirable.

In women the vagina may feel dry, itchy or burning. If you have these problems you should tell your doctor or nurse, because the symptoms can usually be relieved quickly and easily.

Radiotherapy to the pelvic area can also cause a woman's vaginal tissues to shrink, making sexual intercourse painful. These changes are permanent and can become progressively worse. However, regular intercourse, the use of an instrument to expand the vagina (a dilator) and vaginal lubricants can stop the deterioration.



# Making treatment decisions

Sometimes it is difficult to decide on the right treatment for you. You may feel everything is happening so fast that you do not have time to think things through. There is always time for you to consider what sort of treatment you want.

You need to make sure you understand enough about your illness, the treatment and side effects in order to make your own decisions.

You always have the right to find out what a suggested treatment means for you, and the right to accept or refuse it.

## Talking to your doctors

You may want to see your doctor a few times before deciding on treatment. When your doctor first tells you that you have cancer, it is obviously very stressful and you may not remember very much.

- You may need to ask the same questions more than once.
- Before you see the doctor, it may help to write down your questions.

- Take notes during the session or tape-record the discussion with permission from your doctor.
- Take a family member or friend with you; they can take part in the discussion, take notes or simply listen.

## Talking with others

Once you have discussed treatment options with your doctor, you may want to talk them over with your family or friends, with nursing staff, the hospital social worker or chaplain, your own religious or spiritual adviser, or the CancerLink 23237663.

Talking it over can help sort out the right course of action for you.



## Getting a second opinion

You may want to ask for a second opinion from another specialist. This is understandable and can be a valuable part of your decision-making process. Your specialist or local doctor

can refer you to another specialist and you can ask for your results to be sent to the second-opinion doctor.

You can ask for a second opinion even if you have already started treatment or still want to be treated by your first doctor.

## Follow-up

No matter what type of cancer or treatment you have had, you will need regular checkups. Your radiation oncologist will want to see you when you finish your treatment. After this, some people will be referred back to their original doctor or to another doctor experienced in cancer treatment, and some will continue to see the radiation oncologist for follow-up visits.

If you are concerned about any unexpected pain, fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding or anything else - contact your doctor straight away. You do not need to wait until your next appointment.

After radiotherapy, it is important that you continue to take good care of your skin and eat nutritious food.

# What to ask doctors?

You may find the following checklist helpful when thinking about the questions to ask your doctor. If there are answers you do not understand, it is alright to ask your doctor to explain again.

1. When will the treatment start? How long will the treatment take?
2. How will I feel? Will it be painful?



3. How much will it affect what I can do?
4. What are the short term and long term side effects of my treatment?
5. How should I take care of myself during treatment?
6. Can I lead a normal life after the treatment?
7. Do I need to pay special attention to my diet?
8. How do I know whether the radiotherapy is working or not?
9. How much will it cost?
10. Can I take Chinese medicine during radiotherapy?

# Seeking support

## Emotional support

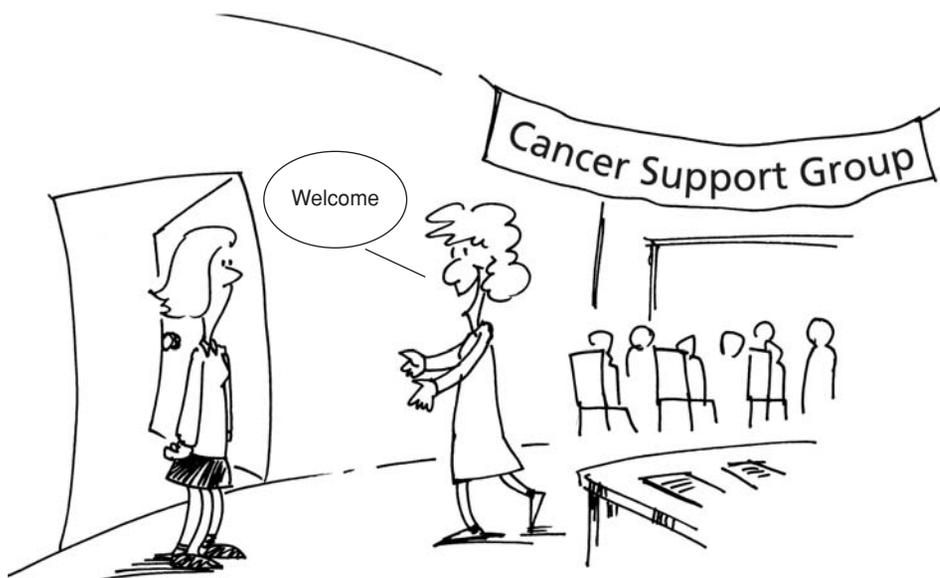
It will help to talk about your feelings with your partner, family members or friends, or a hospital counsellor, social worker, psychologist or your religious or spiritual adviser.

Sometimes you may find that your family and friends do not know what to say to you. You may feel able to approach them directly and tell them what you need. You may prefer to ask a close family member or a friend to talk with other people for you. Some people may feel so uncomfortable that they avoid you. They may expect you to 'lead the way' and tell them what you need. This can be difficult to handle and can make you feel lonely.



## Financial help

Cancer is a serious illness. Many cancer patients will need to face not only side effects of the treatments and emotional trauma, but also financial difficulties. The disease can become a tremendous burden.



Apart from using the public health care services, the medical insurance and welfare provided by employers as well as Government hardship funds for the less well-off are all useful to cut down your medical expenses.

You may approach the medical social workers or Cancer Patient

Resource Centres in major hospitals or institutions that might be able to provide assistance. The 'Comprehensive Social Security Assistance' (CSSA) offered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) may also help in solving your financial difficulties. For details please Call SWD hotline at 2343 2255.

Contact the medical social worker in your hospital or call our Hotline 3656 0800 for more information.

When you are first diagnosed with cancer, it is normal to experience a range of extreme emotions, such as fear, sadness, depression, anger or frustration.

You do not have to handle the changes to your life alone; support is available.

## Relaxation techniques

Some people find relaxation or meditation helps them feel better. The hospital social worker or nurse will know whether the hospital runs any programs, or may know about local community programs. Your community health centre may also be able to help.

## Relationships and sexual intimacy

The way we feel about ourselves is closely tied to our relationships and to our sexual responses to our partners. We all have

different ways and levels of expressing our needs for intimacy. For some people, sexual intimacy is very important and for others it is less so.



Having cancer treatment can change the

way people feel about themselves and their partners. Some people find that they feel no difference, or that the cancer experience draws them even closer to their partner. Others may be less interested in intimacy and sex, or feel that these things are temporarily less important.

With most types of radiotherapy, your enjoyment of sex is unlikely to be affected, although people having radiotherapy to the pelvic area may experience temporary discomfort.

Radiotherapy may make you feel too tired or nauseated to want sex. Some people may also feel that they are less sexually attractive to their partner, because of changes that cancer and its treatment have caused to their body.

Good, open communication will do a lot to reassure both your affection and need for each other. If you are concerned about changes in your usual lovemaking pattern, talk about them with your partner. He or she may feel that, if they raise the topic,

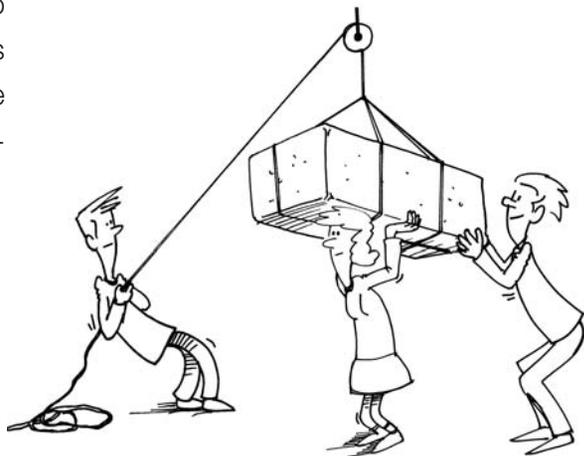
they might place too great a demand on you or might make you feel guilty.

If you don't feel like sexual intercourse, there are many other ways in which you and your partner can maintain closeness and warmth. Touching, cuddling, kissing and stroking can all be pleasurable and comfortable and, as you begin to feel better, you can gradually resume your usual ways of lovemaking.

## Caring for someone with Cancer

Caring for someone with cancer can be very stressful, particularly when it is someone you care about. Look after yourself during this time. Give yourself some time out, and share your worries and concerns with someone outside.

You will probably have to attend many appointments with doctors, support services and hospitals. Many people have found it helpful to take another member of the family or close friend with them. It also helps to write down questions beforehand, and to take notes during the appointment.





## Who can help?

The most important thing to remember is that there are people available to help you and your family. Often it is easier to talk to someone who is not directly involved with your illness. You may find it helpful to talk to a counsellor who is specially trained to offer support and advice. Many people also find great comfort in their religion at this time. Hong Kong Cancer Fund is always willing to discuss any problems that you might have and we can put you in touch with a counsellor or a support group.



## Hong Kong Cancer Fund Service Network

Our six “Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres” in major public hospitals and the two CancerLinks Support Centres in the community provide free counselling, support and information to those in need. Together they form a seamless service network that meet the needs of those living with cancer at different stages of their cancer journey.

### ■ *Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres*

There are altogether six Cancer Patients’ Resource Centres within the oncology departments of the major public hospitals. They are often the first point of contact for support and information after a diagnosis. The centres provide cancer information, emotional support, counselling and guidance to those in need.

### ■ *CancerLinks*

We have two care centres outside the hospital setting which cater to the specific needs of cancer patients throughout different stages of their diagnosis. CancerLink Central offers a well designed holistic rehabilitation programme which emphasizes individual needs while CancerLink Wong Tai Sin is the home to 14 support groups and is the centre for peer sharing and group activities.

Care specialists including registered social workers, oncology nurses, counsellors and therapists are on board to provide support, information and specialised services.

Programmes in our care centres are carefully designed to meet different needs. Private and group counselling are conducted by registered professionals to help patients and families deal with different emotional aspects during their course of treatment. There are also courses to develop coping skills, relaxation classes to help relieve mental and physical stress, and peer support groups for experience sharing. There is also a well-stocked library in each centre, with rehabilitation equipment ready for use or loan.

Whether you are seeking self-help information or group support, choices are always available.

## ■ **Hotline**

Our hotline receives thousands of calls every year. It is supervised by professionals who share and give advice on both physical and emotional difficulties faced by patients and their families. Talking with someone who understands can make a huge difference.

Hotline : 3656 0800





# Your personal Radiotherapy record

Your doctor or nurse can help you to complete this record.

What radiotherapy treatment am I receiving?

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How often will I receive this treatment?

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What are the possible side effects of treatment?

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Contact names

Telephone

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# Appendix

## Hong Kong Cancer Fund Support Network

### **CancerLink Care Centres**

#### **CancerLink Central**

Unit 3, G/F., The Center, 99 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong  
Tel: 3667 3000 Fax: 3667 3100 Email: canlinkcentral@hkcf.org

#### **CancerLink Wong Tai Sin**

Unit 2-8, G/F., Wing C, Lung Cheong House, Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate, Kowloon  
Hotline: 3656 0800 Tel: 3656 0700 Fax: 3656 0900 Email: canlink@hkcf.org

### **CanSurvive** (English-speaking Support Group)

Tel: 2868 0780 Hotline: 2328 2202 Fax: 2524 9023

### **Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital**

#### **Cancer Patients' Resource Centre**

Level L1, Radiotherapy & Oncology Department, 3 Lok Man Road, Chai Wan, Hong Kong  
Tel: 2595 4165 Fax: 2557 1005

### **Queen Mary Hospital**

#### **Cancer Centre**

2/F., Professors' Block, 102 Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong  
Tel: 2855 3725 Fax: 2855 3901

### **Prince of Wales Hospital**

#### **Cancer Patients' Resource Centre**

3/F., Sir Yue Kong Pao Cancer Centre, 30-32 Ngan Shing Street, Shatin, NT  
Tel: 2632 4030 Fax: 2636 4752

### **Queen Elizabeth Hospital**

#### **Cancer Patients' Resource Centre**

Room 601, Block R, 30 Gascoigne Road, Kowloon  
Tel: 2958 5393 Fax: 2332 458

### **Tuen Mun Hospital**

#### **Cancer Patients' Resource Centre**

Tsing Chung Koon Road, Tuen Mun, NT  
Tel: 2468 5045 Fax: 2455 7449

### **Princess Margaret Hospital**

#### **Cancer Patients' Resource Centre**

2/F. & 3/F., Block H, 2-10 Princess Margaret Hospital Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon

### **Kwong Wah Hospital**

#### **The Breast Centre**

Department of Surgery  
1/F., South Wing, 25 Waterloo Road, Kowloon  
Tel/Fax: 3517 5240

## Other Helpful Organizations in Hong Kong

### **Social Welfare Department**

Hotline: 2343 2255

### **Rehabaid Centre**

Tel: 2364 2345 Fax: 2764 5038

### **The Samaritans**

(24-hour Multi-Lingual Suicide Prevention Hotline)

Tel: 2896 0000 (English) 2382 0000 (Chinese)

### **Domestic Helpers**

(via The HK Council of Social Service)

Tel: 2864 2857 Fax: 2865 4916

### **The Chain of Charity Movement**

Community Support & Escorting Service

(can arrange visits, transportation to hospitals and shopping etc.)

Tel: 2560 6299 Fax: 2777 2269

### **Government Ambulance Service**

Tel: 2735 3355

### **Easy Access Bus**

(can arrange visits, transportation to & from hospitals / clinics for those 60 or above with movement difficulties)

Tel: 2348 0608

### **St. John Ambulance (24-hour service)**

Tel: 2576 6555 (Hong Kong) 2713 5555 (Kowloon)

### **The Jessie and Thomas Tam Centre**

( to provide bereavement counselling service)

Tel: 2725 7693 Fax: 2304 2277

### **Comfort Care Concern Group**

(to provide bereavement counselling for terminally-ill patients and their families)

Tel: 2361 6606 Fax: 2361 6294

### **Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care**

(Provide bereavement counselling service)

Tel: 2868 1211 Fax: 2530 3290

Website: [www.hospicecare.org.hk](http://www.hospicecare.org.hk)

## Publications by Hong Kong Cancer Fund

### UNDERSTANDING SERIES

No.	Title
01	Bladder Cancer
02	Bowel Cancer
03	Brain Tumor
04	Breast Cancer
05	Cervical Cancer
06	Chemotherapy
07	Hodgkin's Disease
08	Hysterectomy
09	Larynx Cancer
10	Liver Cancer
11	Lung Cancer
12	Lymphoedema
13	Mouth & Throat Cancer
14	Nasopharyngeal Carinoma
15	Non-Hodgkin's Lymphomas
16	Oesophagus Cancer
17	Prostate Cancer
18	Radiotherapy
19	Stomach Cancer
20	Thyroid Cancer
21	Uterus Cancer

### HOW TO COPE SERIES

No.	Title
01	Breast Care after Surgery
02	Cancer and Complementary Therapies
03	Coping at Home: Caring for someone with advanced cancer
04	Coping with Cancer
05	Diet and Cancer
06	Hair Loss
07	Pain and other Symptoms of Cancer
08	Sexuality and Cancer
09	Talking to Someone with Cancer
10	What Do I Tell the Children
11	When Cancer Comes Back
12	When Someone In Your Family Has Cancer

Please call 3667 3000 to request your free English booklet.

# I would like to help

I want to support the production of the cancer booklets by giving a **monthly donation** of

- HK \$500       HK \$300       HK \$200       HK \$100  
 HK \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I want to give a one-off donation of :

- HK \$2,000       HK \$1,000       HK \$500       HK \$300  
 HK \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Information

(Mr / Mrs / Ms ) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No.: \_\_\_\_\_

## Donation methods

- Autopay ( we will forward the autopay form to you)  
 Cheque (please make payable to **The Hong Kong Cancer Fund**)  
 Credit Card (please fax to 2524 9023)  
 Amex (service charge waived)    Visa    Mastercard    JCB    Diner's Club

Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Issuing Bank: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date (valid for two months): \_\_\_\_\_

Card Holder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



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## For Office Use Only

Authorisation Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the form in BLOCK LETTERS and return to us by post to The Hong Kong Cancer Fund, Room 2501, Kinwick Centre, 32 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong, or fax the form to 2524 9023.

All donations of HK\$100 or above are tax deductible. All information collected will be treated with strict confidence and for internal use only.