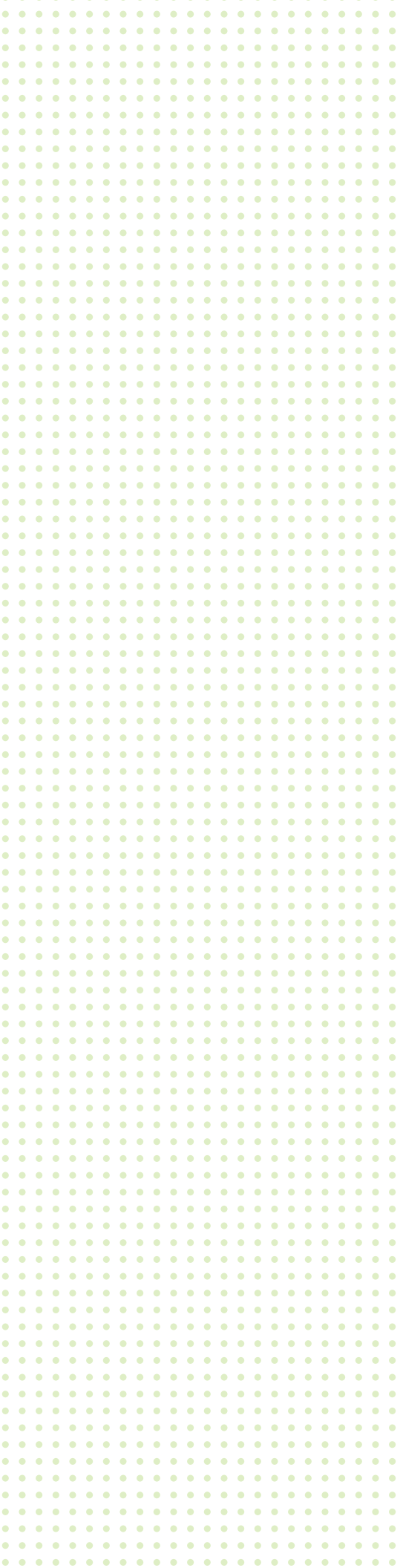




# Radiation Oncology Patient Guide

# Table of contents

- Comprehensive cancer care ..... 4
- Radiation therapy..... 5
- Consultation ..... 5
- Daily radiation therapy treatment ..... 6
- General instructions..... 6
- Skin care ..... 7
- Palliative care and social work services ..... 7



# Welcome and thank you for trusting MercyOne Clinton Radiation Oncology for your care.

Our compassionate health care providers are dedicated to helping you reach your treatment goals. Through every step, our cancer care team, in collaboration with the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, is here to support, educate and empower you to be an active participant in your care. This guide provides important information to support you during your treatment.

Please feel free to ask questions of any member of your cancer care team, and tell us how we can help you. Thank you again for choosing MercyOne.

## **Radiation Oncology hours:**

Monday through Friday: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

563-244-3611

## **Members of the cancer care team include:**

Radiation Oncologists \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Nurse \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Radiation Therapists \_\_\_\_\_

Dosimetrist \_\_\_\_\_

### **\*Available upon request:**

Social Worker, Pastoral Care, Dietitian,  
Palliative Care, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy



**Your cancer care team  
will provide support to  
you throughout the  
many phases of your  
cancer treatment.**

# Comprehensive cancer care

At MercyOne Clinton Medical Center, cancer care includes a spectrum of services that span several treatment options. Medical oncology involves chemotherapeutic agents to shrink or eliminate malignant tumors, and is managed by a medical oncologist.

Radiation therapy treatments are provided through the use of a linear accelerator and CT simulator system at the radiation oncology facility at MercyOne Clinton Medical Center, 1410 N. Fourth Street. The radiation oncology program was developed with input and ongoing support from the University of Iowa Department of Radiation Oncology.

Surgical oncology provides care to cancer patients involving diagnostic, therapeutic (removal of the primary tumor) and supportive surgical procedures. These are offered by surgeons through inpatient and outpatient programs.

Any or all of the above treatment options can be used for cancer patients. Treatment choice is dependent on the type and site of the cancer as well as the age and status of the patient. Because the array of services that a cancer patient requires is diverse, the primary goal is to provide a broad spectrum of state-of-the-art care for patients in a timely manner, and in a caring environment where they can remain close to home.

.....

**Radiation oncology is a specialty that includes the use of radiation to shrink or eliminate malignant tumors.**

.....



# Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy is the medical specialty that uses different forms of radiation to treat cancer. Many forms of radiation are available, and the choice for you depends on the type of cancer and its location. Cancers are growths or collections of abnormal cells of which many are sensitive to radiation. However, each type of cancer reacts to radiation in different ways, so treatments vary for specific types.

Radiation affects both normal and cancerous cells, but with appropriate schedules of radiation therapy treatment, it is often possible to kill cancer cells while allowing normal cells to recover. In addition, through careful treatment planning, we can direct radiation to the

cancer while sparing most normal tissue around the cancer. To do so, we may have to treat the cancer from both sides of your body or from several different angles. Treatments may consist of more than one type of radiation, which can be done using our linear accelerator. At no time are you radioactive when you are receiving external radiation therapy.

**Radiation affects both normal and cancerous cells.**

## Consultation

On your first visit to the Radiation Oncology Center, check in with the receptionist and have a seat in the waiting room. You will be asked to sign a release of information so we can obtain your medical records.

The nurse will call you into an exam room where your weight and vital signs will be assessed. You are encouraged to bring a family member or close friend with you at consultation time. Plan to spend one to two hours in the radiation oncology facility on your first visit.

You may need to have one or two more appointments to plan the treatment before your treatment course can begin. An appointment will be made for you to have a CT scan to define the treatment area. During CT simulation, lines will be drawn on your skin to indicate the area of radiation treatment. You will be given instructions regarding these appointments on your first visit to the radiation oncology facility. A simulation CT scan will be done for treatment purposes in the position of your daily treatment. The radiation therapist will take a photograph of your lines to indicate in your medical record where your treatment was given. Routine imaging will take place for quality assurance purposes.

You may need to undress, and a robe will be provided for you to wear. You do not need to remove your jewelry or watch unless you wear it on the specific area being treated.

The radiation therapist will position you on the table for each treatment and then leave the treatment room. You should not move during the set-up or during the treatment itself. Actual treatment times take only a few seconds, but you may spend up to 15 to 20 minutes in the treatment room.

**Plan to spend one to two hours in the radiation oncology facility on your first visit.**

# Daily radiation therapy treatment

Undergoing the treatments is similar to an X-ray examination; however, you may breathe normally. The treatments cause no pain or discomfort. The treatment machine is large, and makes various noises while it is in use. Be assured that we will be in continuous contact with you through closed-circuit television and a two-way intercom system while the treatment is given. If you should have any problem, we will turn off the machine immediately and help you.

Your treatments usually are given daily, Monday through Friday, with a rest on weekends. The therapists will notify you of any holidays on which you will not receive treatment. We will try to make your daily appointments convenient for you. If you find it necessary to change treatment times, please ask your radiation therapist. Your radiation oncology physician will examine you and review your progress once a week or more often if necessary. This review will require a longer than normal visit.

Side effects from radiation therapy may occur. They are generally related to the tissues in the treatment field. We will discuss specific side effects with you during your consultation and throughout your treatment. For certain patients, radiation therapy may cause a drop in your blood count, so periodic blood tests will be required.

Please let us know if you have any problems. The radiation oncology team, whose members are available to help you at any time, includes physicians, nurses, radiation therapists, dosimetrists, physicists, social workers, dietitians and chaplains.

.....

**Undergoing the treatments is similar to an X-ray examination.**

.....

## General instructions

### Nutrition and medication

Your weight will be recorded weekly, and more often if necessary. It is very important that you maintain an adequate diet and get sufficient rest. You are encouraged to continue some physical activity. Any specific restrictions and requirements will be discussed with you.

The doctor will review your current medications, which can usually be continued throughout the course of radiation. Any additional medications will be prescribed as required.

If needed, a registered dietitian will be available to help you with your individual nutritional problems. If you are on a special diet, such as diabetic or sodium-restricted diets, the dietitian can help you change the diet plan as needed.

### Birth control

It is important that you not get pregnant while you are receiving radiation therapy. Please discuss birth control methods with your radiation therapy physician.

.....

**A registered dietitian will be available to help you.**

.....

# Skin care

It is very important that you do not wash off the colored lines. The treatment area must not be washed with soap, nor should lotions, creams or powders be applied, unless directed by the radiation oncology physician or nurse. You may shower, but do not use soap in the treated area. Pat the area dry.

Wear only loose-fitting clothing over treatment areas normally covered with clothing. Heat in any form should not be applied to the treatment areas. Also, avoid any exposure of the areas to intense direct sunlight or ultraviolet rays. Ice packs should not be applied to the treated skin.

Toward the end of your treatments the irradiated skin may become pink and itchy. In some cases it will tan and flake the way a moderate suntan does. Avoid scratching the skin in the treated area and wearing any clothing that rubs the area. Skin reactions heal quickly after treatment is completed, and you'll be given ointment to soothe the irritation if needed.

.....

**Side effects from radiation therapy may occur.**

.....

# Palliative care and social work services

Palliative care is specialized care that aims to improve the quality of life for patients who are facing serious or chronic illnesses, and for their family members. The goal of palliative care is to reduce suffering by relieving the pain, symptoms and/or the stress of a serious illness to enhance quality of life. Palliative care aims to support patients and their families, regardless of the treatment goals and life expectancy, through:

- Emotional support and counseling related to coping, adjustment to your illness, relationship or family concerns, or decision-making
- Information and referral services about community programs that may be helpful to you, i.e. in-home services, transportation
- Financial information and assistance including information on Medicaid and Medicare
- Advance Directive information – Living Wills, Medical Power of Attorney
- Support group information





**MercyOne Medical Center Clinton**  
1410 N. Fourth St.  
Clinton, IA 52732

563-244-3611  
**MercyOne.org**