

# Let's talk about...

## Preparing for Radiation Therapy

### Radiation:

A tumor is a group of unhealthy cancer cells that stick together. These cells can stay in one spot or spread to other parts of the body. Radiation is a treatment that uses invisible energy beams to remove or slow down the growth of cancer cells. You can't see or feel the energy beams.

Before treatment starts, a **Computed Tomography (CT) Simulation** is needed to help create the treatment plan. The CT simulation is also known as "radiation mapping" and helps the medical team know where the radiation needs to go.

### For tumors in the brain:

If the tumor is in the brain, you will lay flat on the CT table while staff helps to create two special tools.

- **Neck Mold:** You will lie on a squishy beanbag filled with water. As it dries, it shapes perfectly to the neck.
- **A Radiation Mask:** This is made of mesh plastic with tiny holes so you can breathe easily. The plastic is warmed up so it's soft, then gently shaped over the face. It is clipped to the table during the CT scan to cool and harden.
- **Keeping the Tools:** The radiation unit keeps your mask and mold for every appointment. Once you finish all of your treatments, the mask can be taken home. You can even ask your child life specialist for ideas on ways to decorate it.

### For all other tumors:

For tumors in other parts of the body, you will also lie on the CT table with staff helping to create tools for treatment.

- **A Body Mold:** You will lie on a large, squishy beanbag. A vacuum sucks the air out of the bag, making it hard. This creates a perfect mold of your body, so you stay in the exact same spot for every treatment.
- **Skin Marks:** The team will use special stickers or tiny permanent marks (like a small dot) on your skin. These act like "X marks the spot" to help the machine line up perfectly every time.
- **CT scan:** After the tools are created, you may come in and out of the CT scanner (though remain on the table) to fix the location of the marks as needed.

### Patients requiring anesthesia for the CT simulation appointment:

If your child needs medicine to help them sleep (anesthesia) for the CT scan, they will get it before the molds or mask are made. Parents can stay with their child while they receive this medicine. Many school-age kids and teens can do the scan without anesthesia if they are provided with preparation first. You can ask if a "child life specialist" is available. They are experts who help kids understand what to expect and work together with patients to develop coping plans.

After the CT scan is done, you will get a check-in card and a list of all future appointment dates and times. Your next visit will be the first day of radiation treatment.

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: <http://ucdavis.health/childlife>

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## Radiation Therapy Appointments:

- After you check in, a staff member will take you to the treatment room. You can pick out music to listen to and choose a fun color for the room.
- The room will have the tools made during your CT scan. You will lie on the treatment table. The team will use the tools to help the body stay very still and safe.
- Once everything is ready, the staff and family will leave the room. For the first visit, parents can watch from a monitor outside. After that, parents can wait in the lobby or dressing room. Parents can come back into the room as soon as the treatment is over.
- Your medical team will tell you how many visits you need and how long each one will take.

## CT Simulation Scanner



## VERSA Gold Radiation Therapy Room



## Anesthesia Recovery Area

