



PATIENT E-BOOK

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WELCOME



Welcome to Alliance Cancer Care

When faced with cancer, you want compassionate care and the best treatment available. Alliance Cancer Care ensures that's exactly what you get, with state-of-the-art technology conveniently close to home. We are here to guide you through your cancer journey, with experienced and caring staff. Thank you for choosing Alliance Cancer Care.

What to expect from Alliance Cancer Care

We are dedicated to providing you with sophisticated radiation treatment in a caring and comfortable environment. Our team of physicians, nurses, radiation therapists, and staff are committed to meeting your physical, emotional, and all other needs. We are here to answer your questions and guide you through the process of radiation.

Most patients receive radiation treatment as an outpatient. This means you will come and go for your radiation treatments and will likely not require a hospital stay.

Our Locations

We have five convenient locations to serve you.

- » Huntsville
 - Blackwell Medical Tower
 - Clearview Cancer Institute
 - Crestwood Medical Pavilion
- » Decatur
- » Florence
 - Singing River Cancer Center

What is Radiation Therapy?

At Alliance Cancer Care, we treat early-stage, recurrent, and advanced cancers using radiation therapy. Physicians have safely and effectively used radiation therapy to treat cancer for more than 100 years. It is a very common and highly successful cancer treatment. Radiation therapy used alone or along with other treatments often leads to cancer remission. In more advanced cancers, radiation may improve a patient's quality or length of life.

Radiation therapy uses high-energy particles or waves to destroy or damage cancer cells. Radiation kills cancer cells or slows their growth by damaging their DNA. When the DNA is damaged beyond repair, the cell stops dividing or dies. Dead cells are broken down and removed by the body. Non-cancerous cells in the area can also be affected by radiation, but most recover and continue functioning normally.

YOUR FIRST VISIT

How to prepare for your visit:

- » Save time by completing paperwork ahead of your appointment ([hyperlink to patient forms](#))
- » Read over our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Questions for your Doctor (see page 10).
- » Confirm the date, time, and clinic location of your visit.
- » Consider bringing a trusted family member or friend, to help listen, take notes, and/or support you.
- » Read our clinic specific details to find out where to park, how to find our clinic, etc.
- » Ensure you have the following to bring to your visit:
 - Photo ID
 - Insurance card(s)
 - Updated medication list
 - Consider printing the “First Visit Worksheet” to bring for taking notes (see page 8)

What to Expect:

- » Your first appointment will include registering you as a new patient and meeting with your doctor.
 - Please arrive on time for your visit.
 - Check in at our front desk to start your new patient registration.
 - ◊ Copies of photo ID and insurance cards are made, photo obtained for identification purposes.
 - Your nurse will review your medical history and any symptoms you are having.
 - You will meet your doctor who will review your test results, perform a physical exam, and discuss your diagnosis and personalized treatment recommendations. *The First Visit Worksheet is a good place for writing notes as you discuss treatment with your doctor.*

YOUR CARE TEAM

Doctor:
Green scrubs or
professional dress

**Advance
Practice Providers:**
Professional dress

Nurses:
Navy
scrubs

Therapists:
Teal
scrubs

Front Desk:
Gray
scrubs



Our team members wear uniforms. To help you identify each person's role, here is a guide to our uniforms at Alliance Cancer Care.

INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

How much will it cost for my radiation?

This is a question most patients ask. We agree this is an important question for you to ask and have answered before you receive radiation treatment. That said, this is an incredibly complex question to answer. Because several factors influence the cost of radiation, the answer is ultimately different for each patient.

Our commitment to you is that we will work with your insurance company to help get your therapy approved and make sure you are aware of the financial obligations you may have prior to your treatment starting.

How do we figure out what radiation treatment costs?

Many factors are considered when calculating the cost of your radiation treatment.

What kind of cancer do you have and how is it best treated? Do you have insurance? What does your insurance policy cover for radiation therapy? Does your policy have a co-insurance or a daily copay? How much does your insurance allow for radiation costs?

Your radiation oncologist is going to plan the radiation treatment most beneficial for you. Some treatment types cost more than others, due to complexity. The number of treatments also influences the cost of treatment, with the number of treatments required ranging anywhere from a single treatment to 45 treatments. Depending on all the factors just described – the type of cancer, type of treatment, and the number of treatments needed to treat the cancer, the price varies for each patient and situation.

Once the physician develops your treatment plan, we work with your insurance to determine what they will cover and whether there will be any out-of-pocket expenses for you.

What does insurance cover?

Two terms we previously mentioned will determine how much you will be responsible for once your primary insurance has paid its portion for your radiation.

- » Co-insurance: This is a percentage of the total amount you are responsible for paying after you meet your deductible. For example, if your policy has a deductible of \$1,000 and pays 80% of the total cost once you meet your deductible. You would be responsible for the first \$1,000 and then 20% of the remaining cost. Let's say your treatment costs \$11,000. You pay \$1,000 for your deductible, leaving \$10,000. Your plan would pay \$8,000 (80%), and you would pay \$2,000 (20%). You would be responsible for a total of \$3,000.

When you start radiation treatment, you may have already met your deductible through surgery, chemotherapy, or other medical services. If this is the case, your insurance would immediately begin covering their portion of treatment costs. Using the same numbers above, if your treatment costs \$11,000, your insurance would pay \$8,800 (80%), and you would be responsible for a total of \$2,200 (20%).

- » Daily Copay: If you have a daily copay, it means that you will be responsible for a copay each time you come in for treatment. This may be the same amount as your office visit copay, but sometimes it is different depending on the insurance plan.
- » Out-of-Pocket Maximum: This is the maximum amount you have to pay during your plan year. Take the same example from above. If your out-of-pocket maximum is \$2,500, you would only have to pay \$2,500 of the \$3,000 you were originally paying. Your insurance would then cover costs beyond the out-of-pocket maximum.

If you have already had some other medical appointments and diagnostic tests this year, your out-of-pocket maximum may have been reached for the year already. Take the example from above, assuming you already had other medical expenses. For example, if your out-of-pocket maximum is \$2,500, and surgery costs you \$2,000 you would be responsible for \$500 to meet your out-of-pocket maximum. Then your insurance would cover the remainder of your treatment costs.

We also see many insurance plans that cover radiation therapy at 100%, so it is worth checking the details of your policy.

Where do we get the amount to charge?

Once your treatment plan is approved by your physician, we submit that plan to your insurance. Each insurance company has a specific amount that they will pay for your type of treatment plan. This is called an allowable.

So, what will my treatment cost?

Depending on treatment type and duration, the total price for a course of radiation therapy can range from \$4,500 to \$50,000. For most patients, much of this cost will be paid by your insurance. The total course of treatment includes:

- » All of your treatments
- » Imaging used throughout your treatment
- » Continuous monitoring by our physicists and physicians
- » Weekly visits with your physician
- » CT Simulation
- » Expertise in planning radiation from our dosimetrists, physicists, and physicians
- » Devices or personalized molds to help keep you in the proper position during treatment

Paying for Treatment

Our primary goal is to make sure you are receiving the best care for your cancer. If you have payment concerns, our office will work with you to design a plan to pay for your portion of the treatment costs. There are several options available.

- » Pay as you go. This would be for patients who have a daily copay, not co-insurance.
- » Have it billed to you and pay when you receive the bill.
- » Have it billed to you and set up a payment plan with our billing company.
- » Apply for financial assistance through Alliance Cancer Care, which is based on your income level. This is also an option for patients who do not have insurance.

Our goal is to meet with patients who may have financial responsibility before treatment begins. We will review your benefits and provide you with an estimated total cost and total out-of-pocket cost. If you have questions about your financial responsibility or insurance, please contact our office at 256-319-5400.

FIRST VISIT WORKSHEET



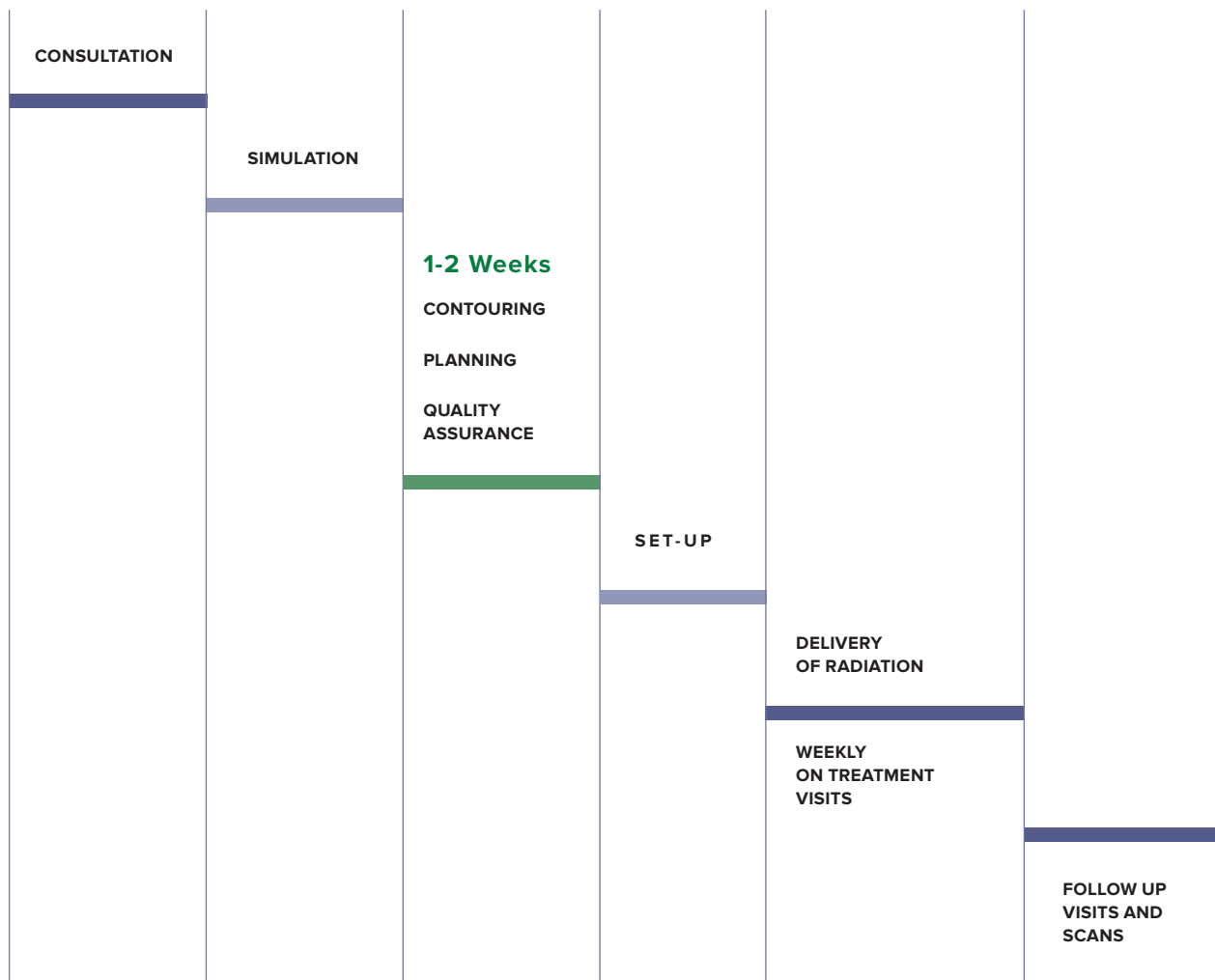
MY DOCTOR

NURSE PRACTITIONER

NURSE(S)

MEDICAL ASSISTANT(S)

RADIATION TREATMENT TIMELINE



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR

Questions to Ask your Cancer Doctor(s):

1. What is the goal of treatment? Cure or living longer or help with symptoms?
2. Why do you recommend this and what are the chances it will work?
3. What are the side effects of this treatment?
4. How do we know treatment is working?
5. Are there other treatment options?
6. What type of cancer do I have? Can I have a copy of my pathology report? Is there information I can read or a particular website that can give my family and I more information about my cancer?
7. Exactly where in my body is my cancer located? Has this cancer spread to any other areas? What is the stage of my cancer? What is the prognosis?
8. Will I need surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or a combination? What is the game plan for treating this cancer? What options do I have for different treatments?

If you need chemotherapy or radiation therapy:

1. How long will each treatment last? How often will I receive treatment? How many treatments will I need? What is the goal of my treatments?
2. Will I be able to work during treatments?
3. What are the main side effects of treatment? Is there anything I can do to prevent side effects or help keep myself healthy during treatments?
4. What number should I call or who should I email with questions about my treatments? Is there an emergency phone number?

Other general questions:

1. Do I need genetic testing?
2. Who should I speak with about my insurance questions?
3. Is there a social worker to help me with support services?

How to contact us:

- » Noona, the patient portal (hyperlink)
- » Call our office, leave a message for the nurse.
- » Call 911 if you are having an emergency

F

A

Q

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Q: What is radiation treatment?

A: Radiation therapy is a form of cancer treatment using X-rays to kill cancer.

Q: Why do I need radiation?

A: Radiation can be used for curative or palliative reasons. It is often used alongside other treatments such as chemotherapy.

Q: How is radiation given?

A: A common form of radiation therapy is external beam radiation therapy (EBRT). This is where a machine delivers invisible beams of radiation focusing on the cancer location.

Q: Does it hurt?

A: Most patients do not experience pain, but each patient reacts to radiation treatment differently.

Q: How many treatments?

A: Your unique situation determines the exact treatment schedule. Most patients have treatments daily, Monday through Friday, over the course of several weeks.

Q: Are there side effects?

A: Side effects vary depending on the area being treated and the individual. Most patients experience some fatigue, but are able to do normal daily activities. Some patients may have more severe side effects, which your radiation oncologist will discuss in detail.

Q: Will I be radioactive?

A: No, this type of radiation treatment does not cause “radioactivity”. This means you are safe to be around family and friends without restrictions.

Q: How do I know the treatments are working?

A: Patient response varies, but your radiation oncologist only recommends treatments that have been proven to be effective, and will monitor your progress appropriately.

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