

Our Last Webinar on Replay

| All about radiotherapy

Here are 5 points to remember:

1. Radiation therapy at a glance

It is used to try to cure the cancer or to reduce the pain or symptoms of bone metastases. Technological radiotherapy developments now allow cancer cells to be destroyed while preserving your neighboring organs as much as possible. It may use high-intensity X-rays emitted by a device (external beam radiation therapy) or by radioactive implants inserted into your prostate to kill cancer cells (permanent or temporary brachytherapy.)

2. What form of radiation therapy is the best treatment for prostate cancer?

The main thing is to agree on which form of radiation therapy is best suited and best targeted for your prostate cancer. If localized and not too aggressive, brachytherapy or external beam radiation therapy are two good options with success rates similar to radical surgery. For cancers at a higher risk of progression, temporary brachytherapy, a source of high dose-rate radiation, is often combined with external beam radiation therapy to maximize the effectiveness of the treatment.

3. I have a small, low risk prostate cancer, but my doctor has advised against brachytherapy. Why?

Because it is not for everyone. If your prostate is very large or if you have many urinary symptoms, you may have more side effects from brachytherapy. Your doctor may then refer you to other options such as radical surgery. If your prostate is moderately large without significant urinary problems, hormone therapy may be used for a few months to reduce its size before brachytherapy and/or external beam radiation therapy.

4. What about the side effects of radiation therapy?

Advances in radiation therapy techniques have made side effects less frequent and less severe. The most common problems associated with radiation therapy affect urinary, gastrointestinal and erectile functions. They can show up during radiation therapy, right after, several months or years after your treatment. Talk to your radiation oncologist and healthcare team about managing some of these effects before the start of your treatment.

5. What is stereotactic and systemic radiation therapy?

Stereotactic radiation therapy is a type of external beam radiation therapy. Stereo means 3-D and tactic means to probe. Stereotactic radiation therapy allows radiation beams to be given to a very specific area. It delivers large doses of radiation in each dose and the treatment is usually carried out in a few sessions. Systemic radiation therapy uses radioactive material that circulates in your body and is absorbed by your cancer cells before destroying them. Radium-223 (Xofigo) is the type most often when cancer has spread to the bones and is causing pain.