

Immobilisation masks for radiation therapy

Information for patients

Some people will need an immobilisation mask for their radiation therapy. This is often used if you are having radiation therapy to your brain, head or neck area.

What is an immobilisation mask?

- This is a mask, or shell, that is custom made to fit you.
- It is made from a special plastic mesh.
- The mask may cover only your head or may include your neck and/or shoulders.
- Your mask is made by a radiation therapist.
- Your mask will have details marked on it such as your name and date of birth. It is kept in the radiation therapy department.

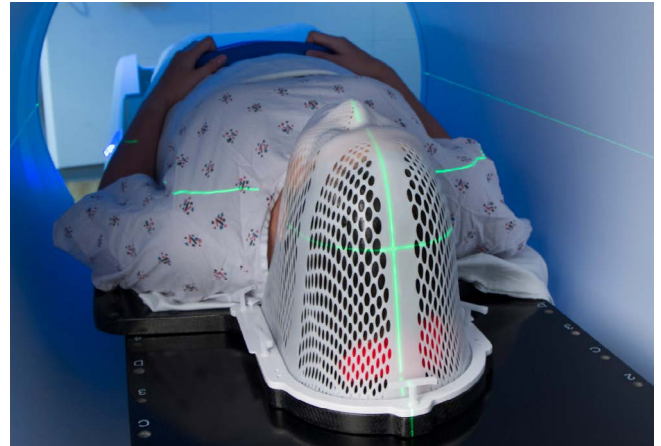
Why do I need a mask?

- It is important that you are in the same position for radiation therapy simulation and your radiation therapy treatments.
- The mask helps keep your head, neck and shoulders in the same position.
- Important markings for your treatment are on the mask.



Important information

- The mask is an important part of your treatment. It makes sure the radiation therapy is given directly to the cancer.
- You can breathe easily when you are wearing the mask and when it is being made.
- The mask will feel firm. Tell your radiation therapy team if the mask is uncomfortable, painful or if you need it taken off.



What if I feel claustrophobic or nervous?

Some people may feel claustrophobic or nervous about wearing a mask. If this happens tell the radiation therapy team. They can help you by:

- putting on music or podcasts for you to listen to
- suggesting breathing exercises or meditation
- referring you to a psychologist or counsellor to help you with ways to relax
- having the doctor order medication to help you.

Making the mask

- The mask is made with you in the radiation therapy department before or during your radiation therapy simulation appointment.
- It is important to keep still throughout the mask making process.
- You may be asked to remove hair pins or elastics, jewellery, hearing aids and dentures.
- If you have a beard it may need trimming or shaving.
- It can be difficult to adjust the mask after it is made so it is important that the mask fits well when it is made.

Mask making process

1. Making the mask takes about 15-30 minutes and there are many steps: You will lie flat on a special table (bed).
2. The mask is heated so that it is warm and becomes soft and stretchy.
3. It is important you stay still and close your eyes. The mask is gently stretched and moulded over your face and neck or shoulders. You may feel some gentle pressure, warmth, and dampness on your face. It will not burn you.
4. The mask is clipped onto the bed. You may hear a clicking noise when this happens.
5. The mask cools and hardens to keep its shape. This takes about 10-15 minutes.
6. The mask will feel firm and snug, but not painful. If the mask is uncomfortable tell your radiation therapy team, sometimes they can make small adjustments to make it more comfortable.
7. The staff may use a marker pen to draw some marks on the mask.
8. The mask is then ready for your radiation therapy simulation and treatment.

Mouth piece

- Some people need a special mouth piece or bite block to put inside their mouth when they are wearing the mask.
- This helps to hold your mouth and tongue in the required position.
- You are still able to breathe if you have a mouth piece.
- Your radiation therapy team will tell you if you need a mouth piece and how it is made.



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Using the mask for radiation therapy simulation and treatment

- At each appointment the mask is gently placed over your head and neck and clipped to the table.
- The marks on the mask help position you correctly at each session. Sometimes, extra marks will be added to the mask using tape and marker pens.
- The radiation therapy team can see, hear and talk to you. They will be close by if you need them at any time.
- Ask your radiation therapy team how long you will have the mask on.

Additional information

Dental work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people will need to see a dentist to check their teeth before they can have a mask made or start radiation therapy. • Some people may need to have teeth removed or repaired. • It is important to do this before a mask is made because it can change the shape of your mouth and face. • The radiation therapy team will tell you if you need to see a dentist before your radiation therapy.
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may need to change into a hospital gown.
Jewellery, hearing aids and dentures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your radiation therapy team if you have any jewellery, piercings, hearing aids or dentures. • You may be asked to remove these items before the mask is made.
Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the time you won't need to cut the hair on your head for the mask. • To help the mask fit better you may need to trim or shave facial hair • The radiation therapy treatment team will tell you if you need to trim or shave your facial hair. • Once the mask is made it is important that you do not make big changes to your hairstyle or facial hair as this can change how well your mask fits.