

# Abdomen

Such as stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, kidney

This information is to be used in conjunction with **My Treatment Booklet**. It provides unique details about receiving radiation to the **abdomen** such as the stomach, pancreas, gallbladder and kidney.

## Pathway



### 1 First specialist appointment

Please refer to My Treatment Booklet.

### 2 Orientation

A patient care specialist (radiation therapist or nurse) will explain the procedure in more detail and answer any questions or concerns you may have about the process or treatment.

Malnutrition screening is also completed and a dietitian appointment is organised as appropriate.

### 3 Planning CT Simulation

When treating an abdominal site, the use of the **assisted breath hold expiration technique**, will likely be trialled. If tolerated by the patient and is suitable for the area of interest, the technique will be used for the CT scan and every treatment appointment following. Coaching and guidance, including a separate information sheet, is provided.

It is very likely you will be asked to be nil by mouth for 4 hours prior to the CT scan. You can have small sips of water to take medications. This can differ for some individuals. If you are nil by mouth for the CT scan then this will need to be followed through for each of your treatment appointments as well. Use of a contrast drink may be considered for some patients to easily identify certain anatomy.

### Position:

You will most likely lie flat on your back with a support placed under your knees. The radiation therapists will make sure you are as comfortable as possible. To hold you in the correct position for treatment immobilisation equipment is made specifically for you. This typically involves both arms well supported above your head in a mouldable cushion type device called a vac-bag.

*If you have any pain, restriction of your arm movement or lying flat, please inform a member of the ARO team, take your normal pain relief prior to scan and bring your pain relief with you.*

Small (approximately 1mm) permanent reference marks will be made on your skin with ink and a needle, at the scan. These are used to position you each day for treatment.

### Scan:

You will have a CT scan in the above position.

## 4 First day of treatment

*If you have any pain, restriction of your arm movement or lying flat, please inform a member of the ARO team, take your normal pain relief prior to treatment and bring your pain relief with you.*

The **Assisted breath hold exhale technique** will be used today and every day for treatment if it was introduced at simulation and found to be effective.

## 5 During treatment

Your radiation oncologist will advise you of possible side effects during and then after treatment is complete. *Please speak to a member of the ARO team about any concerns or changes so we can provide advice and support to meet your needs.*

### Possible short term side effects

#### Fatigue

Tiredness will likely occur. Some people continue to work, while others find this too tiring.

#### Self-care:

- *Keep hydrated (drink 1.5-2L a day, preferably water). Minimise alcohol.*
- *Eat as well as you can.*
- *Exercise regularly e.g. relaxed walking three times per week can be beneficial. You can continue your usual level of activity or introduce mild exercise. Please listen to your body, do not over exert yourself, and rest when you feel the need.*
- *Try to get a good nights' sleep.*

#### Nausea and vomiting

Anti-nausea medication is prescribed if required during treatment.

#### Self-care:

- *Drinking flat ginger ale or ginger tea may provide some relief.*
- *Please inform a member of the ARO team of any concerns including weight loss. Nutrition support is available. Medication may need reviewing.*

## Bowel inflammation

**Due to the closeness of structures in the pelvis, a portion of the bowel (small bowel/intestine, large bowel i.e. rectum/colon) can become inflamed and you may experience:**

- More urgent, looser and frequent bowel motions.
- Increased amount of flatulence (wind) and mucus.
- Abdominal cramps.

### *Self-care:*

- *If your bowel motions change during treatment or you experience any irritation speak to a member of the ARO team.*

## Skin sensitivity

This depends on the amount of radiation therapy dose to your skin. Your ARO team will advise accordingly.

### *Self-care:*

- *When washing the treatment area, use warm water, avoid scrubbing, and gently pat dry. Use soap such as Dove extra sensitive or Simple soap which can be bought from the supermarket.*
- *Do not apply heating or cooling devices in the treatment area such as wheat or ice packs.*
- *Avoid hot pools, spa pools, chlorinated pools and saunas while on treatment and until any skin reaction has completely gone.*
- *Keep the treatment area protected from the sun and wind.*
- *Do not apply sunblock to the treatment area during radiation therapy. Following radiation therapy, once skin reactions are completely gone this area will always be more sensitive to the sun so cover with clothing or apply at least 30+ SPF (sun protection factor).*

## 6 Last week of treatment

Please refer to My Treatment Booklet.

On your last day you will see a nurse or doctor.

## 7 After treatment

Please continue with the current management and self-care of side effects for at least 2-3 weeks after treatment.

### Possible long term side effects

- If any bowel is in the treatment area changes are often mild and no active treatment is required.
- Skin colour can change slightly.
- A very small amount of lung scarring (fibrosis) can occur if any lung is in the treatment area. It may be visible on an x-ray but will not cause symptoms.

- A small risk (~1%) of developing rib fractures due to the weakening bone after radiation.
- An extremely small risk of damage to nerves or the spinal cord.
- An extremely rare risk of developing different cancers, usually many years after radiation.

*Self-care:*

- *Visit Support Services at [www.aro.co.nz](http://www.aro.co.nz) for additional services before, during and after treatment.*