



# What is Palliative Radiation?

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

**P**alliative care may be provided at any point during cancer care, from diagnosis to the end of life. When a person receives palliative care, they may continue to receive cancer treatment.

Palliative cancer care is not meant to cure, but to relieve pain and alleviate symptoms caused by the disease or by other cancer treatments. Palliative radiation is commonly used to reduce tumor size or provide relief from pain, bleeding, or obstructions. It can be used with other treatments meant to cure, but it can improve quality of life especially for patients whose cancers cannot be cured. In recent years, some studies have shown that including palliative care soon after an advanced cancer diagnosis can improve a person's quality of life and mood, and may even prolong survival.

## How is palliative radiation used at RBOI?

**1. To shrink tumors.** In bone cancer, palliative radiation can result in less extensive surgery, often preserving the arm or leg. Slowing tumor growth in stomach cancer can help treat eating problems. In esophageal cancer and lung cancer, it can ease symptoms in people who have trouble swallowing or breathing. Likewise, it can relieve blockages in bladder cancer and in colorectal cancer and can reduce swelling in uterine cancer. Palliative radiation can also ease symptoms caused by lymphoma that has spread

to internal organs, or when a tumor causes pain by pressing on nerves. It may be used as a form of urgent treatment in children with symptoms caused by large tumors in the chest.

**2. To relieve bleeding.** Palliative radiation can relieve bleeding problems caused by tumors in many cancers, among them head and neck, esophageal, lung, stomach, bladder, kidney, colorectal, penile, cervical, uterine, and anal cancers.

**3. To relieve pain.** Palliative radiation can reduce the pressure that tumors exert on bones, nerves, and internal organs.

**4. To slow or relieve cancer's spread.** Palliative radiation can reduce symptoms when tumors have spread to the bones, brain, or internal organs, such as in lymphoma and in head and neck, breast, lung, kidney, prostate, skin, and other cancers.

**5. To use when other treatments aren't possible.** In cancers such as those of the pancreatic and biliary system and others, palliative radiation can help relieve symptoms (such as pain) in people with advanced cancers or in people who aren't healthy enough for other treatments like surgery.



### by the numbers

1895

German physicist Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen discovers X-rays



1974

First use of the term "palliative care," by Dr. Balfour Mount, surgical oncologist at the Royal Victoria Hospital and McGill University in Montreal



2014

First ever global resolution, issued by the World Health Assembly (governing body of the World Health Organization), calling for improved access to palliative care as a core component of health systems

## Palliative Care is Different from Hospice Care

Palliative care is often associated with end of life, but it can begin at any point during cancer treatment. In addition to preventing or treating symptoms and side effects of cancer and its treatment, palliative care addresses related psychological, social, and spiritual issues. Anyone can receive palliative care regardless of their age or stage of disease.

In contrast, hospice care begins when the sole focus is quality of life. To help patients and their loved ones make the transition from treatment meant to cure or control cancer to hospice care, palliative care can:

- prepare patients for physical changes that may occur near the end of life,
- help patients cope with emotional issues that arise, and
- provide support for family members and caregivers.


RBOI's on-site social workers are there to help cancer patients and their loved ones at every step of the way. Give us a call.



### Patient-centered radiation oncology close to home

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