Welcome to the Radiation Therapy Program at the Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre. We hope that this short video will help to explain the different steps involved in your Radiation Therapy journey.

First, let’s take a quick tour through the Radiation Therapy department. As you enter through the Cancer Centre Doors from the parking lot, you will see Tim Hortons on your right and to the far left the Radiation Therapy Reception Desk. This is the desk where you’ll be checking in for all of your appointments. In the far corner is the Treatment Preparation and Education Desk. Around the corner from the Reception Desk is the Review Clinic. This is where you will go to see your Radiation Oncologist for your weekly review visits. Along the left side of the long sunlit hallway are the six treatment units, each with its own waiting area on the right. Each waiting area has its own set of change rooms and cupboards. The last area to visit on this quick tour is the planning area, where your treatment planning will take place.

There are many steps to having radiation treatment and each will be explained in this video. These steps include Education (pause), Treatment Planning (pause), Daily Treatment (pause), Weekly Review (pause), and Follow-Up Care (pause). A team of health care professionals and volunteers are on hand to guide and assist you and your family during each of these steps. This team is made up of: A Radiation Oncologist (pause), a nurse (pause), Radiation Therapists (pause), the receptionists (pause), and the hospital volunteers (pause). The team will provide the best plan of care that will meet your personal needs. Other health care professionals are available on standby should
you need them such as: a dietician, a social worker, or a psychologist.

Education. Your treatment should have been discussed by your Radiation Oncologist and Nurse when you made the decision to have radiation treatment. A Radiation Therapy booklet should have been given to you during that visit. The Radiation Therapy booklet is a companion to the information shown in this video. After watching this video, a Radiation Therapist will be on hand to answer any questions you might have.

The next step in your radiation treatment is Treatment Planning. During this appointment, which will take about 30 minutes, the Radiation Therapists will decide what position your body will be in for treatment and also record some measurements. If needed, a CT scan will be taken. A CT scan is simply an x-ray scan of your anatomy. You might also be given some tattoos. Sometimes a tracing may be drawn as a map of the treatment area. Your Radiation Oncologist may or may not be present during this session. Remember that if you are pregnant or suspect that you might be, please tell the team right away.

This planning session is also called a “CT-Simulation” since we will use the information from the CT scan to “simulate” your radiation treatment in a computer. This will be explained more in a moment. The planning session is painless, no injections are involved, and you will not be radioactive afterwards. You might be asked to do some steps to prepare your body for this planning session. You will be told how by the Nurse or Radiation Therapist ahead of time.

Before the planning session begins you will be asked to remove some clothing and
change into a hospital gown, in order to see the area better. When the team is ready, you will be called and escorted into the planning room. Unless translation is needed, it is best that family members or friends wait in the planning area waiting room or main reception. When you are brought into the room you’ll be asked to lie down. The staff will then determine your treatment position. Ideally this position should be comfortable enough for you to maintain for at least 20 to 30 minutes. It’s important to try and relax, lie still, breathe normally, and let the Radiation Therapist perform any movements that are needed. The Radiation Therapists will also let you know when it is okay to move.

To help make sure that you can maintain this position every day of your radiation treatment, a mold might be made. The type of mold made depends on what part of the body needs to be kept still.

The Radiation Therapists will be drawing some marks and placing some stickers around the treatment area. They will also record some measurements.

If a CT scan is needed, the Radiation Therapists will leave the room to perform the CT scan after this point. Again, the CT scan is painless and it is important to try and relax, lie still, and breathe normally during the scan. You will slide in and out of the scanner while it takes the images.

After the scan is complete, the Radiation Therapists will return to recheck all the measurements, so try to lie still for a little longer. They may then place some permanent marks on your skin, which we call tattoos. When the tattoos are given they will feel like pin-pricks. If no tattoos are needed, the Radiation Therapists will draw some tracings of
the area to record the marks drawn on your skin. These marks will be used every day
during your treatments to place you in the correct treatment position.

At the end of the planning session you may be given an appointment card, which will
have the date and time of your first radiation treatment. It is also possible that you will be
given this appointment over the phone a day or two after your planning session.

Once the planning session is completed a period of time will pass between that
appointment and when your radiation treatment will start. This is the amount of time
needed to create your actual treatment plan. This time span could be hours, days, or up
to 2 weeks depending on the type of treatment you will be having.

The information and measurements that we collected from your planning session will be
used to produce the treatment plan. A team that includes your Radiation Oncologist, a
Treatment Planner, and a Radiation Physicist will work together to create this plan. Once
the plan is finished it will go through a number of separate quality checks to make sure
that the best possible plan for your treatment is created.

Your Radiation Treatments.

During your treatment it’s important to check in every day at the Reception Desk by
showing your Health Card. The Receptionists and Volunteers are ready to help show
you the way around the radiation therapy department. Again, if you are pregnant or
suspect that you might be during your treatments, please tell the staff right away.
Remember to prepare your body for treatment if you were told to do so during your
education or planning sessions.

On your first day a Volunteer, Clerk, or Radiation Therapist will escort you to your treatment area and will again explain the layout of the department, pointing out the Review Clinic, the Signage, the change rooms, and treatment waiting areas. You will also be handed your appointment schedule, which will have a week’s worth of appointments printed on it. Every Wednesday, you will receive a new printout with the appointments for the following week.

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown if you had to change into one during your planning session. Once you have changed, feel free to use the cupboards to store your belongings while you are waiting or having treatment. Although we do recommend that you keep your valuables with you at all times. Please have a seat in your treatment waiting area and wait for the Radiation Therapists to call you by name and walk you into the treatment room. For your own safety, and everyone’s privacy, it’s important to stay in the treatment waiting areas and not go beyond the plants by the treatment rooms unless escorted by a Radiation Therapist. Family members or friends should remain in the treatment waiting area or main reception area.

Children should not be left unattended in these waiting areas. And remember that cell phones can only be turned on in the main reception area.

When it is time for your treatment the Radiation Therapists will call you by name from the waiting area and escort you into the treatment room. You will then be assisted onto the treatment bed. Using the tattoos or other markings from your planning session, along
with the information from your treatment plan, the Radiation Therapists will place you into the correct position. As they do this, try your best not to help, unless asked to do so. Once the Radiation Therapists have placed you in the correct position, it is important to try and remain still, and breathe normally from this point on.

As part of our safety checks, the treatment machine will rotate around you and stop at different angles. You will also hear the Radiation Therapists call out and check the settings against those shown in your treatment plan. When all the treatment settings are checked, the Radiation Therapists will let you know that they will be leaving the room to deliver your treatment.

While operating the treatment machine from outside, the Radiation Therapists will be watching you and listening to you at all times. If you need assistance at any time during the treatment, you can simply speak out, and talk to them through the intercom. Otherwise it is important to try and relax, remain still, and breathe normally during treatment. The Radiation Treatment itself is like having an x-ray, you won’t feel anything, and you won’t be radioactive after the procedure.

On certain days before the actual treatment is given, x-ray images are taken to make sure that the correct area is being treated. So while you are on the treatment couch, you may see the imaging equipment move towards you. Once the images are checked the Radiation Therapists will begin the treatment, and check even more settings at the console area, before giving each radiation beam. The radiation treatment will only last for a couple of minutes.
When the radiation treatment is finished the Radiation Therapists will re-enter the room and help you off the treatment bed. It is important to keep still until the Radiation Therapist entering the room says that it is now okay to move. The total time from when you first walked into the room, to the time when you walk out, should be about 15 minutes.

Please be advised that while everyone works hard to stay on schedule there may be unexpected delays that can affect how long you wait for your treatment. These delays can be caused by machine breakdowns, emergency cases with high priority, or power outages. There is a notice by the Treatment unit entrance which shows the approximate wait time.

Every day should proceed like the first, from checking in, to waiting for treatment, and the treatment itself. The appointments may even seem to get quicker. As you move forward with your treatments you may start to notice the potential side-effects that were discussed before you started your treatment. Please remember that you will be closely monitored by your health care team from start to finish. You will be seeing your Radiation Oncologist and Nurse during your weekly review in the Review clinic, to assess and help with any side-effects you may have. You should attend those checkup visits every week, even if you feel fine. It’s a walk-in clinic, and the day and time your Radiation Oncologist is available is shown on your weekly appointment schedule. You will also be seeing your Radiation Therapy team on your treatment unit daily. It’s important to notify them of any changes that occur during your treatment. They have information that they can give to you to help with your side-effects. They can also
arrange for you to be seen by a Nurse or Doctor, on any day if needed.

As you get close to the end of your treatments you will be given information about what to expect after all of your treatments have finished. Other important information, such as contact numbers, will be given to you. You may be given a follow-up appointment to see your Radiation Oncologist after a few weeks. Or you will have other follow-up appointments to see your referring Surgeon or Medical Oncologist. It is important to remember that almost all the side-effects you had from treatment will slowly go away within one to four weeks after your last treatment appointment.

In summary. We would like to thank you for taking the time to watch this video. Hopefully we were able to provide you with helpful information about your Radiation treatment. If you have any more questions or concerns a Radiation Therapist will be on hand shortly to answer them. Again Thank You.