

Radiation Treatment Breath Hold Information for Patients with Breast Cancer

Why do I need to hold my breath?

We want to make sure that your heart is not too close to the treatment area. For some people, their heart is close to their chest wall (the edge of the chest). When you take a deep breath in and hold it, you make more space between the chest wall and your heart. This space ensures that your heart will not be in the treatment area.

Is there a chance I will not need to hold my breath?

You may have 2 planning CT scans, one holding your breath and one breathing normally. Your radiation team will look at these scans and decide if you need to hold your breath for your treatment.

You will know at your first treatment appointment if you need to hold your breath during treatment. If you do not need to hold your breath, breathe normally. If you hold your breath when you are not asked to, it will move the treatment area into the wrong position.

Whether or not you need to hold your breath, your doctor has created a treatment plan that is best for you.



How do I practice holding my breath before my radiation treatments?

During treatment you will be asked to hold your breath for 25 to 30 seconds. Practicing before your treatments will help you do this when you need to.



Practice holding your breath for **30 seconds** at a time

To practice holding your breath:

1. Lie down on your back.
2. Raise both arms above your head.
3. Take a deep breath in and hold.
 - ✓ Practice several times a day.
 - ✓ Aim for 30 seconds (if you can hold your breath for 30 seconds you will not have difficulty during your treatment).
 - ✓ Take a break if you feel light headed or dizzy.

What if I cannot hold my breath?

If you cannot hold your breath, we will protect your heart from the radiation treatment in a different way. You will still get the radiation treatment recommended by your Radiation Oncologist.

How will you know if I am holding my breath during treatment?

During your treatment your breathing will be monitored by the treatment machine and your Radiation Therapists. If you cough, sneeze or become unable to hold your breath the treatment machine will be turned off. The Radiation Therapists will then make sure you are ready to hold another breath and that you are in the right position before continuing your treatment. This keeps you safe and makes sure your radiation treatment is accurate.



Please ask your radiation care team any questions you have about your treatment.