

For patients only

We care for your skin

Skin cancer treatment
using radiation therapy



GenesisCare
Experts in cancer care

What is in this booklet?

You have been given this booklet because your doctor has determined radiation therapy is the right treatment for your non-melanoma skin cancer, at GenesisCare.

This booklet will give you an overview of radiation therapy and what to expect with treatment.

Please keep in mind that this booklet contains general information. If you have any further questions or would like more information, please speak to your healthcare professional.

About GenesisCare

GenesisCare is a provider of integrated cancer care. We believe that care should be focused on the individual, not the condition.

In Australia we have more than 40 oncology care centres in metro and regional Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia.

Our team is dedicated to offering you evidence-based treatments delivered in a multidisciplinary care environment. We offer you personalised care aligned with your doctor's treatment plan, with the aim of ensuring the best possible clinical outcomes.

What is non-melanoma skin cancer?

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells change into abnormal cells and grow at an uncontrolled rate.¹

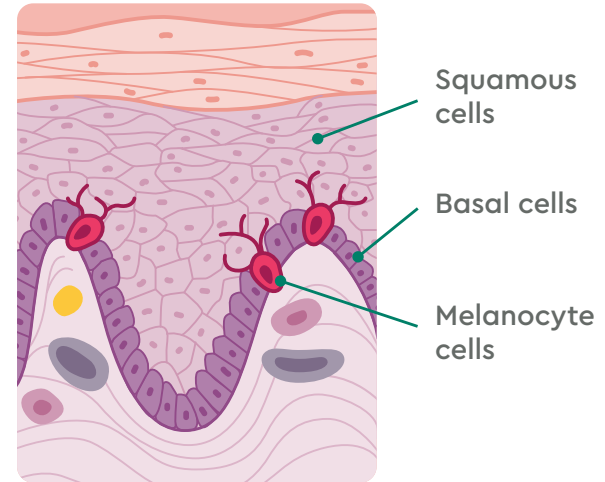
Non-melanoma skin cancer starts in the top layer of the skin, called the epidermis, and is often related to sun exposure.¹ There are two main types of non-melanoma skin cancer, depending on the types of skin cells affected:¹

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma

About 7 out of 10 cases of non-melanoma skin cancers are basal cell carcinomas.² Non-melanoma skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia but is mostly not life-threatening.²

Actinic keratosis (also known as 'solar keratosis') is a pre-cancerous lesion on the skin caused by sun damage.³ Even though actinic keratosis is not cancerous; it can turn into skin cancer and may require treatment.³

Normal epidermis



What are some of the treatment options for non-melanoma skin cancer?

At GenesisCare, our aim is to offer you personalised, evidence-based care throughout your journey. Your doctor and care team will work with you to determine which treatment is most suitable for you. This will depend on a number of factors including the part of your body that is affected, the size of the cancer, potential side effects and what you wish to achieve from treatment.¹

Non-melanoma skin cancer can be treated in several ways, some of which include:



Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy uses high energy X-rays or other particles to treat cancer and can be used at all stages.⁹



Curettage and electrodesiccation

A procedure of scraping away the cancerous cells and killing the remaining cancerous cells with an electric needle.¹



Surgery

This is a common treatment and involves cutting out the cancerous area. Sometimes some surrounding tissue is also removed.¹



Topical treatments

Creams and gels containing chemotherapy or immunotherapy can be applied directly to the skin to remove cancerous cells.¹



What is radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy is a treatment that uses measured and precisely targeted doses of radiation to destroy and stop the growth of cancerous cells.⁵

Radiation therapy can be used alone or as part of your treatment plan after surgery to help prevent cancerous cells from re-growing or new cancerous cells from forming.⁵

Radiation therapy can be used to treat small lesions in difficult to treat areas right through to very large area of skin affected by cancer where tissue conservation is important.^{1,5}

Radiation therapy has been used successfully in treating cancer for over 100 years.⁶ In recent years, there have been many advances in radiation therapy technology.⁷

Radiation therapy may be a suitable choice if you:^{5,8}

- As per your treatment plan your healthcare professional recommends it in combination with other treatments
- You are unable to or prefer not to undergo surgery
- The skin cancer is in an area of the body where surgery might not be appropriate
- You have a large area of skin to be treated

Further details on the radiation therapy treatment process, including common side effects, are covered in the "What you need to know about treatment" section of this booklet. You can also discuss these with your doctor.





Examples of treatment outcomes following radiation therapy

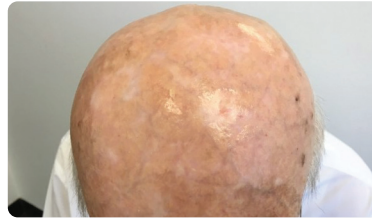


Scalp

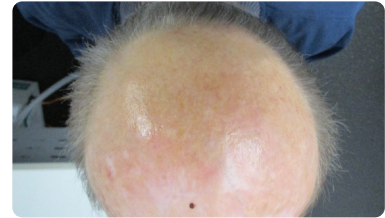


Before treatment

This patient had a large area of sun damage with skin cancers on their scalp. They had received multiple forms of treatment for the scalp in the past, including surgery and skin grafts.



After 3 months



After 12 months

In this case, radiation therapy was used to treat the whole scalp and the scalp remained free of skin cancer one year later.



Nose



Before treatment



After 3 months



After 15 months

This patient had a basal cell carcinoma on their nose. They had not received any previous treatment and was referred to radiation therapy because of the potential cosmetic impact that surgery may have on their nose.

In this case, radiation therapy was used as the only treatment and the nose remained free from skin cancer over one year later.



Limbs

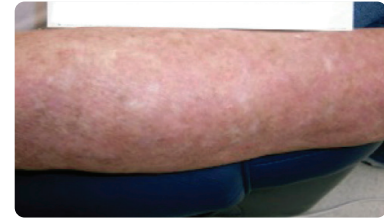


Before treatment

This patient had multiple non-melanoma skin cancers on their arm. They had received multiple forms of treatment on the arm in the past, including surgery and topical treatments.



After 3 months



After 12 months

In this case, radiation therapy was used to treat the whole forearm and only one actinic keratosis was found on the forearm one year later. Note that the patient had a 40-year history of skin cancers in various areas of their body.

Learn more about the patient journey

Consultation

You will have already received a referral to GenesisCare from your doctor (GP) or specialist. Following this the process of radiation therapy starts with a consultation with a specialist known as a radiation oncologist.

Your radiation oncologist will review your medical history and complete a physical examination to assess if radiation therapy is appropriate for you.

For further details on what you can expect before, during, and after treatment, please chat with your doctor or treatment team.

Treatment planning and CT simulation

If treatment is recommended, an appointment will be made for you to have a CT (computed tomography) simulation scan of the treatment area. This process usually takes about one hour.

Your radiation oncologist and radiation therapist will then provide you with a tailored treatment plan and treatment will usually commence within 7-10 days.

Before treatment commences

Before your treatment commences you will have a radiation therapy education session with a nurse who will discuss any concerns you may have regarding what to expect during treatment.

Treatment sessions

During your first treatment session, your radiation therapist will explain the treatment process and answer any questions you may have to ensure that you are as comfortable as possible throughout the treatment process.

Your first appointment will take around 20–30 minutes. The remaining appointments should only take around 10–15 minutes. The treatment session itself only lasts for 6–10 minutes.

The number of treatment sessions needed may vary depending on your personal plan.

The radiation therapy treatment experience may be similar to having an X-ray.⁵ A nurse will be available for advice and support throughout the course of your treatment.

Follow-up care

At your final session, a nurse will discuss your post-treatment care with you and provide contact details in case you have any questions after treatment is completed.

Your radiation oncologist will arrange for a follow-up appointment shortly after you complete your treatment.

Please feel welcome to contact us at any time on the centre numbers provided to you if you need any further information or assistance.

What you need to know about treatment

Before treatment

My doctor has determined this is the right therapy, why might this be?

Radiation therapy may be a suitable choice if the skin cancer is in an area of the body where surgery might not be appropriate, if you are unable to or prefer not to undergo surgery, if you have a large area of skin to be treated or if your healthcare professional recommends it in combination with other treatments.^{5,8}

At GenesisCare, we provide a tailored approach to treatment and will take into consideration a range of factors before deciding on the best course of action for your needs.

How do I get an appointment with GenesisCare and is there anything I need to do before starting treatment?

To receive treatment at GenesisCare, you will need a referral from your doctor (GP) or specialist. Other than this, there is nothing you need to do to prepare for your first appointment. However, if you're unsure about anything please feel free to call us at any time before or during your treatment.

Cost of care

Radiation therapy

- Radiation treatment is typically an outpatient service, with a cost involved for your care
- Private health funds do not cover outpatient services
- Medicare covers approximately 80% of treatment costs (depending on your position within your Medicare Safety Nets)
- Your exact out-of-pocket costs depend on a number of factors including your personal treatment plan, complexity and your position within your Medicare Safety Nets

At your first appointment, you will have a dedicated fee conversation with a team member who will be able to provide you with a quote for the cost of your care and will go through billing, invoicing and Medicare rebates in detail. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with the GenesisCare team at any time.





What you need to know about treatment

During treatment

How long does treatment usually take?

Length of treatment varies from person to person and will depend on your individual treatment plan. As a general guide, treatment is usually given each day from Monday to Friday for around 5 weeks.⁵ The length of each individual treatment session is around 6–10 minutes,¹ and we strive to offer total appointment times of approximately 15 minutes.

Will I need to stay at GenesisCare for long during treatment or take time off work?

You only need to stay at a GenesisCare centre for the length of your appointment. We will also work with you to arrange your appointment times to suit your daily schedule.

Can the treatment be painful?

Your skin may become sore or painful. These reactions are normal and may develop slowly and gradually.⁵ If this occurs, please let our nurses know.

How do I look after the affected skin during treatment?

Prior to starting treatment, your radiation oncologist and nurse will provide you with the appropriate skin care treatment information. You will be monitored closely during the course of your treatment for any skin reactions.

Are there any potential side effects I should know about?

The most common skin-related side effects associated with radiation therapy are redness, itching and dryness of the skin similar to a severe sunburn. These side effects usually develop gradually two weeks into your treatment. They may peak at the end of the course of treatment and for a further few weeks after your treatment is completed.⁵

There may be other less common side effects and our nurses will provide you with more information about possible side effects and how to manage them during the course of your treatment.

What you need to know about treatment

After treatment

How long does it usually take to recover?

You may notice that the appearance of your skin gets worse before it gets better – this is a normal response to radiation therapy. The worst skin reaction may be experienced towards the end of treatment and for a further few weeks after completion of radiation therapy.⁵ It could take around 6 weeks for your skin to heal completely after treatment is completed.¹

Will I need to come back to a GenesisCare centre after I complete my course of treatment?

After your treatment is completed, we will arrange a follow-up appointment to check on your progress and answer any questions you may have post-treatment. After this, further appointments with our team may be arranged as required. You can also call us at any time if you have concerns or questions. We are here to support you for as long as you need.



GenesisCare Locations

In Australia, we have oncology care centres in metro and regional Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. For more detailed information about treatment and centre locations, visit [genescare.com](https://www.genescare.com)



Here for you

This booklet aims to help provide general information about treatment at GenesisCare, and it is recommended you speak with your radiation oncologist, treatment team or referring GP/ specialist with any questions or concerns that you may have. The team at GenesisCare is here to help you, so don't hesitate to contact us or drop in to see us if you have any questions or concerns.

Any medical procedure or treatment involving the use of radiation carries risk, including skin irritation and associated pain. Before proceeding with treatment you should discuss the risks and benefits of the treatment with an appropriately qualified health practitioner. Individual treatment outcomes and experiences will vary.

References: **1.** Cancer Council. Understanding Skin Cancer. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/downloadable-resources> (accessed September 2023). **2.** Cancer Council. What is non-melanoma skin cancer? Available from: <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/non-melanoma-skin-cancer> (accessed September 2023). **3.** American Cancer Society. About Basal and Squamous Cell Skin Cancer. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/about/what-is-basal-and-squamous-cell.html> (accessed September 2023). **4.** National Cancer Institute, NCI dictionaries, Dictionary of cancer terms, 'radiation therapy'. Available from: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/radiation-therapy> (accessed September 2023). **5.** Cancer Council. Understanding radiation therapy. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/treatment/radiation-therapy> (accessed September 2023). **6.** ASCO.org. Cancer.Net®. What is Radiation Therapy? Available from: <https://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/how-cancer-treated/radiation-therapy/what-radiation-therapy> (accessed September 2023). **7.** Prof Gerald Fogarty, Howard Liu, Cancer Council Australia Keratinocyte Cancers Guideline Working Party. Guidelines:Keratinocyte carcinoma/Radiotherapy . In: Clinical practice guidelines for keratinocyte cancer. Sydney: Cancer Council Australia. [Version URL: <https://wiki.cancer.org.au/australiawiki/index.php?oldid=208363>, cited 2023 Sep 12]. Available from: https://wiki.cancer.org.au/australia/Guidelines:Keratinocyte_carcinoma. **8.** American Cancer Society. Radiation therapy for Basal and Squamous Cell Skin Cancers. Available from: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/treating/radiation-therapy.html#:~:text=Radiation%20therapy%20can%20also%20be,when%20combined%20with%20other%20treatments> (accessed September 2023). **9.** Cancer Council. Understanding Radiation Therapy. December 2021. Available from: https://www.cancerjournal.com.au/cancer-information/cancer-treatment/radiation-therapy/common-questions/steps-in-radiation-therapy?utm_source=&utm_content=&utm_medium=cpc&gclid=CjwKCAjw5_GmBhBIEwA5QSMFeCADBgwwd7fXopBuzesKkRgfUH-LxnE-1ZcPG7643CLyqK6B4qxRoCitUQAvD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds (accessed August 2023).

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patients for patients

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