

## HOW ARE THESE TREATMENTS DIFFERENT?

- Different capabilities: Some stereotactic systems can treat only tumors in the head, others in the head and neck, and others anywhere in the body.
- Different schedules: Some stereotactic treatments may be best given in a single session, others may be given in a few treatments over several days.
- Different ways to achieve accuracy: Different systems use different ways to keep patients in the same position. Some use customized holders to keep the patient in position, others have the machine track any movement of the patient.

## WHO IS QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE RADIATION THERAPY?

**Radiation oncologists** are physicians who are highly trained, board certified and licensed doctors who use radiation therapy in its various forms to care for patients with cancer. They are assisted by other members of the treatment team, including **neurosurgeons, radiation therapists, radiation oncology nurses, medical physicists, dosimetrists, social workers** and **nutritionists**. Radiation oncologists oversee the care of each person undergoing radiation treatment.

## WHERE SHOULD I BE TREATED?

Modern radiation therapy facilities are widely available across the country. Not all of them offer every type of treatment. You should choose a center that offers the most appropriate treatment for your particular type of cancer. Possibilities include:

- Academic medical centers located at major universities across the country.
- Community hospital cancer centers.
- Freestanding radiation therapy or cancer centers.

The suitability of a given treatment center will depend on the specific treatment you require, the technical capabilities of the center, the experience of the radiation oncologist, the location and possibly restrictions from your health insurance plan.

## HOW DO I CHOOSE THE BEST TREATMENT FOR ME?

Choosing between treatments is confusing, and sometimes there is no simple answer. For many patients, there are several reasonable options. Factors to consider:

- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions of your doctor and had them answered to your satisfaction?
- Is reliable medical evidence available supporting the use of this system for a specific cancer available? (This evidence may be hard to find for some new technologies).
- What are the side effects?
- Do you feel comfortable with the radiation oncologist?
- Is travel required to get to the treatment?
- Is it covered by insurance?

## THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Question heavily advertised treatments that are not backed by scientific evidence.
- Your physician should always discuss all of the appropriate, medically approved treatments related to your cancer. Be concerned if your doctor refuses to talk about other treatments.
- You can always seek a second opinion. No doctor should discourage you from getting one.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

**RT Answers**  
[www.rtanswers.org](http://www.rtanswers.org)

**National Comprehensive Cancer Network**  
[www.nccn.org](http://www.nccn.org)

**National Cancer Institute**  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

## ABOUT ASTRO

The American Society for Radiation Oncology is the largest radiation oncology society in the world with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating cancer with radiation therapies.

ASTRO is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, advancement of science and advocacy.

# ASTRO

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

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## PLAIN TALK FOR RADIATION THERAPY PATIENTS: STEREOTACTIC RADIOTHERAPY



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