

WELCOME

As you begin the treatment process, we hope you feel comfortable with our staff and surroundings at the Karmanos Cancer Institute at McLaren Flint and the McLaren Proton Therapy Center. Our radiation oncologists treat patients in Flint, Lapeer and Owosso. We offer X-ray radiation and proton radiation therapy treatments. Your radiation oncologist will work with you to determine the best treatment modality for your case. Here are a few important things to know to help you become familiar with the treatment process.

X-ray/Photon Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy is the use of ionizing radiation to treat cancer. We use special equipment to aim the radiation at cancerous tumors. You may often hear us refer to radiation therapy as X-ray therapy or photon radiation.

Proton Therapy

Proton therapy uses electronically charged protons to treat cancer. We use advanced technology and a pencil beam to directly treat and target the depth of cancerous tumors. Proton therapy is not appropriate for all cancers, but is often used to treat tumors that are in sensitive areas where X-ray radiation treatment may not be the best option for the patient.

Doctor/Physician Assistant Day

When you are receiving treatment you are required to see the nurse and physician assistant (PA) once a week. These visits are important to assess how you are responding to the treatments. Each facility has a different day for this service. The therapist will notify you which day you should expect to stay longer to see the physician assistant and nurse. On this day, once you finish treatment, return to the waiting area. Once our physician assistant is ready to see you, a nurse will then escort you to an exam room for your visit. Should you need to see the nurse or PA at any other time while under treatment, please notify your therapist.

Daily Treatments

On average, you should plan to be in the clinic approximately 30 minutes each day. This time may vary for patients having special procedures.

Simulation/Markings

Once it is determined that radiation therapy is the right treatment for you, the first step is the simulation process. During your simulation, the radiation therapists will create an optimal setup for your treatments. This may include the use of an immobilization device, such as a mask or a cradle, that will be used to ensure that you are in the correct position for each treatment. Most patients are given small, freckle-like permanent tattoos during this process. You may be asked to maintain additional markings that will assist in your daily treatment alignment.

Monitoring

We make safety and high-quality patient care a priority at each of our centers. Each treatment room is equipped with video cameras and an audio system that will allow the therapists to monitor you fully and effectively during each of your treatments.

Imaging

Depending on the machine the physician has prescribed, routine digital imaging will be done. This could be once per week or once a day. These images are used for verification of treatment fields only. The images are not used to provide diagnostic information.

Treatment Planning/Appointments

Upon completion of your simulation, our team will begin working diligently with your radiation oncologist to develop a treatment plan specific to your case. During this process the physician and planning team will determine your dose, number of treatments and which machine will provide an optimal plan for you. In some situations, you may be treated on multiple machines throughout your course of treatment.

Once your treatment plan has been finalized and your insurance has been verified, you will be contacted by a radiation therapist to begin scheduling your appointments. The duration of this process may vary depending on the complexity of your treatment plan. Please feel free to contact our department at any time to check the status of your plan. If your medical oncologist prescribes chemotherapy during your radiation treatments, please communicate this information with our staff so we are able to better coordinate and improve your overall cancer care experience.

A permanent appointment time will be given by the radiation therapist following your initial appointment, based on need and availability. Every effort is made to accommodate your request for specific treatment times. You will be given your requested appointment time if it becomes available.

You should try to notify the treatment staff 1-2 days in advance if you need to change your appointment time.

If you are unable to keep any scheduled appointments, please call the reception desk. The phone number for each facility is located on the back of this brochure. If you are scheduled at the end of the day and have not contacted our department, the radiation therapist will give you an additional 20 minutes beyond the appointment time before being considered a "No Show" for the appointment.

Occasionally, there may be special circumstances that arise requiring the adjustment or cancellation of your appointment. Even though these situations are rare we appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through these instances. We will communicate these changes with you in a timely fashion.