



Government of **Western Australia**
North Metropolitan Health Service
Sir Charles Gairdner Osborne Park Health Care Group



CyberKnife® Spine treatment

Patient information



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What is the CyberKnife® System?

The CyberKnife® Robotic Radiosurgery System is a radiation therapy treatment machine mounted on a robotic arm similar to robots used in car manufacturing.

The CyberKnife® system can track tumour and patient movement to deliver radiation to tumours anywhere in the body, with a high degree of accuracy. Although the name implies scalpels and surgery, the CyberKnife® system does not cut the skin.

Treatment for spinal lesions

In the case of spine treatments, it is almost impossible to prevent patients and their internal anatomy moving during treatment. The CyberKnife® system is capable of moving with the patient's anatomy, allowing a greater degree of accuracy and higher doses of radiation to some areas, while minimising dose to the surrounding healthy tissue. This helps to reduced side effects commonly associated with conventional radiation therapy treatments.

Pre-treatment preparation

In preparation for CyberKnife® treatment you may be required to have CT (computer tomography) and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans.

CT planning appointment

Depending on the site of spine that is treated, a special custom-fit body cradle, neck rest and/or mask may be made for you at this appointment. This is to ensure that you lie in the same position for each treatment.

Using data from the planning CT scan, a customised treatment plan will be formulated by a team that includes your radiation oncologist, CyberKnife® radiation therapist and medical physicist. This takes approximately 1-2 weeks.

During the treatment

Please wear comfortable clothes to these appointments and if lying on your back is uncomfortable or painful, we advise that you take your prescribed painkillers 30 minutes prior.

You will lie on the treatment couch in either the body cradle or your mask. Once you are in the correct position, checks will be completed and your treatment will begin.

When treatment is in progress, the team will be able to see you on the cameras and talk to you via intercom. During treatment, images will be taken continually to confirm the treatment location. The CyberKnife® will move around you and treat from many different angles and positions. You will not feel anything, and the equipment will not touch you.

Treatment takes approximately 1 hour, and you will be required to lie still and breathe normally during that time. Due to the length of time you must lie flat on the couch, we advise that you refrain from eating a big meal before your treatment. You may bring your favourite music or audio book to listen to during treatment.

The treatment is usually delivered in 1 to 5 sessions on alternate days. Please arrive 15 minutes before your appointment time and allow 2 hours for your visit.

Possible side effects

Treatment is generally well tolerated, and side effects are minimal. Reactions are very individual and may not be the same in every patient.

Your doctor will have explained potential side effects at your initial appointment, including the possibility of experiencing some degree of nausea either during the treatment or in the 1 to 2 weeks after it finishes. Your doctor will prescribe anti-nausea medication for you to take daily during treatment, if required, and will discuss any side effects related to the section of spine that is treated. Should you require further information about the side effects relating to your treatment, please ask your doctor.

Emotional wellbeing

It is completely normal for you to feel emotional for some time after the diagnosis of cancer. Sleeping, eating and mood disturbances are all quite common under these circumstances.

Try spending time with people that make you feel good. Relax and do things you enjoy. Try to exercise regularly and say no to those activities you don't feel like doing.

Tell the radiation therapists or nursing team if you feel you are having difficulty coping with your diagnosis, treatment, domestic and travel arrangements or finances. They will organise for you to see trained professionals as needed.



Completion of treatment

Allow yourself time to recover once treatment is completed. Each patient responds differently to their treatment and recovery times may vary. It is best not to compare your progress with that of others.

If you are experiencing any side effects from the treatment, these may continue for the next few weeks and may even get worse before they begin to get better. Side effects should gradually subside within 1 month.

Tiredness and fatigue due to radiotherapy may affect you for some time. Here are some tips on how to manage this:

- Continue exercise such as walking, bowling, golf or swimming
- Consider scheduling your activities for the day according to your energy levels
- Ensure you have a healthy balanced diet
- Ensure you are adequately hydrated
- Accept help from friends or family and ask for help if you need it.

Follow-up appointment

When radiation therapy is completed your radiation oncologist will organise a follow-up appointment.

If you experience any problems related to your treatment after completion and before your follow-up appointment, please contact Radiation Oncology on (08) 6383 3000, Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm.

Outside these hours you can see your GP or, if the matter is urgent, go to the Emergency Department.



Further support

There are many services offering support to people undergoing cancer treatments.

These include:

Look Good Feel Better

Free call: 1800 650 960

Website: www.lgfb.org.au

Look Good, Feel Better is a free workshop run by professionals from the cosmetics industry for women. The practical workshop covers skincare, make-up and headwear demonstrations and participants receive a complimentary Confidence Kit full of skincare and make-up products.

Experienced volunteers from the beauty industry help show how to manage the changes that may occur to the skin, hair and general appearance as a result of treatment.

Workshops are run frequently in the Radiation Oncology Department. Please speak to the radiation therapists or nursing staff if you are interested in attending.

WA Psycho-Oncology Service

Phone: (08) 6457 1177

Email: wapos@health.wa.gov.au

This service is available to adult Western Australians diagnosed with cancer. Clinical psychologists apply psychological theory and evidenced-based assessment and treatment strategies to help people address their needs and meet their goals. You may self-refer or ask a health professional to refer you.

Cancer Council WA

Phone: 131 120

Website: www.cancerwa.asn.au

The charity works across every area of every cancer, from research to prevention and support, assisting people from diagnosis through treatment and beyond.



Healthdirect

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthdirect.gov.au

This free 24-hour health service offers general guidance for patients, including symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options.

Solaris Cancer Care

Phone: (08) 6383 3475

Website: <https://solariscancercare.org.au>

DD block,
Ground floor,
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital,
Hospital Avenue, Nedlands

Solaris Cancer Care provides up-to-date, practical, evidence-based information on complementary integrative approaches to cancer management, disease prevention, health and wellbeing activities and support services that are designed to help people feel and cope better with their cancer and treatment.

Cancer Australia

Phone: 1800 624 973

Website: www.canceraustralia.gov.au

Established by the Australian Government to benefit Australians affected by cancer.

WA Cancer & Palliative Care Network

Phone: 0400 021 538

Upper GI cancer nurse coordinator (for patients with cancer of the pancreas)

What is the referral process?

The only public CyberKnife® treatment is available in Perth at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Western Australian patients will need a referral from their doctor addressed to one of these consultants:

- Dr Nicholas Bucknell
- Dr Sean Bydder
- Dr Jeremy Croker
- Dr Joshua Dass
- Dr Suki Gill
- Dr Chris Harper
- Dr Colin Tang
- Dr Mandy Taylor
- Dr Rohen White

As of 1 July 2024, we are unable to accept patients from outside WA. Patients from other areas, including overseas, should instead discuss similar available treatment options closer to home.

Radiation oncology referrals

Email scgh.cancercentrereferrals@health.wa.gov.au

Fax number: (08) 6457 1053

What is the cost for treatment?

There are no out-of-pocket expenses to Medicare card holders.

CyberKnife® contact details:

Radiation Oncology

Cancer Centre
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
Gairdner Drive
Nedlands WA 6009
Phone: (08) 6383 3000
Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm

For general CyberKnife® enquiries

Contact the chief radiation therapist
Phone: (08) 6383 3404



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.

