

IMRT reduces risk of side effects in breast cancer patients

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Breast cancer patients treated with intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) instead of standard whole breast irradiation (WBI) have a lower incidence of acute or chronic toxicities, according to a study in *Practical Radiation Oncology (PRO)*, the official clinical practice journal of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO).

Researchers are constantly conducting studies to determine the most effective [breast cancer treatment](#) that also reduces the incidence of potential side effects, including skin inflammation, swelling and infection.

Researchers in this study sought to compare standard WBI to WBI with IMRT (using both a typical treatment time and an accelerated treatment time) in terms of toxicity levels for patients. In a retrospective review, over 300 patients treated with one of the forms of radiation therapy were looked at and it was determined that radiation therapy using IMRT, regardless of the length of treatment, is associated with greatly reduced toxicities compared with the older, more standard radiation therapy technique.

A side analysis determined that larger breasted women had higher toxicity levels than smaller breasted women, however they still had reduced toxicities with IMRT over standard radiation, even though these levels were higher than smaller breasted women. This included IMRT with a shorter treatment time; previous trials usually exclude larger breasted women from receiving radiation using an accelerated treatment

schedule.

"Our data support the increasing role of IMRT in delivering not only whole breast irradiation but also whole [breast irradiation](#) using an accelerated treatment time," Frank Vicini, MD, a [radiation oncologist](#) with Michigan Healthcare Professionals/21st Century Oncology in Farmington Hills, Mich., said. "This is great news for [breast cancer patients](#) who, if eligible, can not only receive their radiation treatment in a shorter amount of time but also reduce their risk of many side effects."

Provided by American Society for Radiation Oncology

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