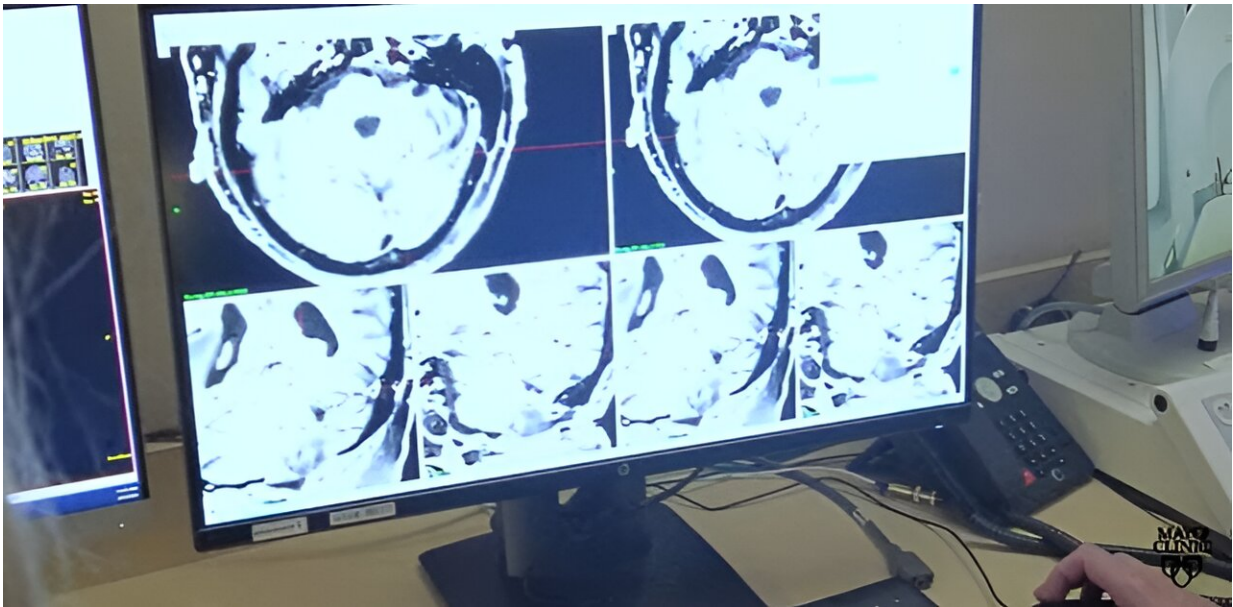


Video: Breaking through radiation therapy myths

July 27 2023, by Jason Howland



Credit: Mayo Clinic News Network

People who have cancer might have the disease treated with several therapies, including chemotherapy and radiation. Radiation therapy, which more than half of all people with cancer receive as part of their treatment, uses high-powered energy beams, such as X-rays or protons, to kill cancer cells.

Some patients may be nervous about receiving [radiation therapy](#).

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Jennifer L. Peterson, a [radiation](#) oncologist, helps clear up some of the misconceptions about what often is an important part of a person's [cancer treatment](#).

Radiation therapy can play a valuable role in a person's cancer treatment plan. But Dr. Peterson wants to dispel a few myths.

"There are many misconceptions when a patient hears the word radiation. One of the most common is that radiation is going to make me sick," she says.

She says side effects from radiation are dependent on what part of the body is being treated and how much radiation is used. Those [side effects](#) can include [hair loss](#), skin irritation, sore throat, nausea or diarrhea.

"And we work through those as we work the patient through treatment. But, in general, it's very well tolerated, and most patients can continue with their normal activities throughout the course of treatment," says Dr. Peterson.

Another misconception is the radiation is going to cause another cancer.

"The risk of developing a second cancer from radiation is exceedingly low. That's a long-term risk, something that could happen decades down the road, but the ability of the radiation to treat the current tumor or the current problem far exceeds that risk," says Dr. Peterson.

The bottom line is that modern methods of radiation therapy are precise. They target the beams directly at the cancer while protecting the rest of the body from high doses of radiation.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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