

## Radiation Therapy Masks

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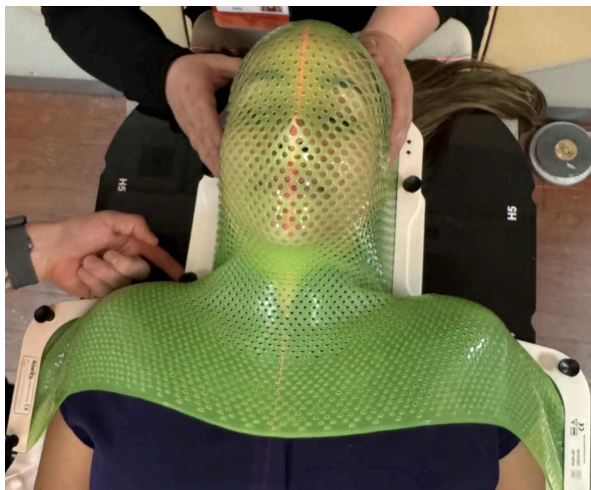
A plastic mask is used for radiation treatments to the brain, head, neck and upper chest. The mask keeps your head from moving during treatments. This allows us to give radiation accurately to this part of the body and avoid damage to nearby healthy tissue. Even though you may think you can hold your head still, we need to be very precise when treating these areas. The mask is custom made for you by our staff and is worn during each radiation treatment.

### Making the mask

The mask is made during your CT simulation or treatment planning scan. The therapists explain each step in the process. First, we ask you to remove jewelry, hair accessories, dentures, partials and hearing aids. The mask starts as a flat piece of plastic mesh, with holes in it so you can see and breathe. The plastic is warmed until it softens, then it is stretched and molded over your head and neck area. As it cools, the mask hardens to the desired shape. This takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Once your mask is made, we ask that you do not make major changes to your hair style, hair length, beard or facial hair since it can change how the mask fits.

During your planning scan and radiation treatments, you lie on your back on the table. The mask is placed over your head and neck and fastened to the table. This keeps these areas from moving during your treatments.

These photos show how a radiation mask is used on the treatment table.



A bite block is a plastic device that you bite down on. If your doctor orders it, a bite block may be used along with the mask to help limit radiation to the tongue. A bite block pushes your tongue up, down or to the left or right, based on the area being treated. If it is used, the bite block may or may not be attached to the mask.

## **How you may feel**

The mask may make you feel anxious or scared. This is common. Some tips to help ease these feelings include:

- Taking slow, deep breaths
- Closing your eyes
- Meditating
- Having your favorite music played in the room
- Seeing yourself in a place that makes you feel happy or relaxed

If these techniques do not work, your doctor may prescribe anti-anxiety medicine. If so, it will not be safe for you to drive, and you will need someone to drive you to and from your treatment visits.