

## What happens to the mask after treatment?

- All your identifications and marks are removed from the mask at the end of your radiation treatment.
- You have the option to take the mask home if you would like to.
- Traditionally, if patients declined to take the mask home, the masks were disposed of as recycled material.
- More recently the masks are transformed into works of art as part of the Bravery Unmasked Program where you can decorate your masks and transform them into an art piece.



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## Helpful Resources

- Visit the Targeting Cancer website ([www.targetingcancer.com.au](http://www.targetingcancer.com.au)) to watch the video on making of the immobilisation mask and how its used during radiation treatment. On this website search for “Julie’s Story”.
- For more information to help you understand radiation therapy for Head & Neck Cancer and the processes involved, please visit the Beyond Five website ([www.beyondfive.org.au/](http://www.beyondfive.org.au/)) .

## Frequently asked questions

- Do I have to shave if I have a beard?
  - Yes, if you have a beard, you need to trim it or shave before the mask is made.
- Will I be able to breathe with the mask on?
  - The mask is made to fit you snugly, but shouldn’t be uncomfortable. It doesn’t block your breathing.
- What happens if I’m claustrophobic or get anxious about the mask?
  - Let your doctor , nurses or radiation therapists know if you feel worried or anxious. They can make suggestions about what may help you to relax.



Health  
South Western Sydney  
Local Health District



SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY  
Academic Unit

# Radiotherapy Immobilisation Masks for Head & Neck and Brain



BEYOND FIVE  
The Face of Head & Neck Cancer

## Why do we need immobilisation mask?

- During daily radiation treatment, it is necessary to ensure that you will be in exactly the same position.
- If you are getting radiation to the brain or head & neck area, you may need an immobilisation mask for daily treatment.
- Masks are used:
  - to make it easier for you to stay still
  - to help keep your head from moving so that you are in the exact same position for each treatment
  - so any markings that may be used to position you for the treatment can be drawn on the mask, not your skin
- A radiation therapist makes the mask during your CT planning scan and the process usually takes around 30 minutes.
- The mask will be moulded to your face and secured to the table to gently hold your head in place during radiation treatment.
- During the treatment, it may feel strange to have the mask on at first. Let the radiation therapists know if you feel worried or anxious. They can make suggestions about what may help you to relax.

## How are the immobilisation masks made?



The masks are made from a thermoplastic material and has air holes (like a mesh) allowing you to see and breathe through it.



The mask is heated in a warm water bath (70°C) for 3-5 minutes so it becomes soft and pliable.



The mask is placed on your face and stretched downward slowly so that it moulds to fit your face exactly. It may feel like having a warm towel placed on your face. You will still be able to breathe.



After a few minutes the mask moulds to your face and becomes hard. The mask is then cooled by applying iced towels. The radiation therapists may draw some markings on the mask that will be used to position you for the treatment.



Once the CT planning scan is complete, the radiation therapist will take the mask off, and it is now ready for use during treatment.