

# IMMOBILISATION MASKS FOR HEAD AND NECK RADIATION THERAPY

## WHY IMMOBILISATION MASKS MAY BE REQUIRED

During the course of your daily radiation treatment, it is very important that you are in exactly the same position each day and for the whole duration of each treatment. An individualised head and neck immobilisation mask that is specially made just for you will:

- contain markings that may be used to position you for treatment. This will ensure that there will be no markings on your skin.
- help keep your head still during the treatment so that the radiotherapy is delivered precisely to the target area containing the cancer.

The radiation therapy team will make the mask for you before you have your computed tomography (CT) planning scan; the mask making process usually takes around 30 minutes.

The mask will be moulded to your face and secured to the treatment table (bed) so that your head is gently held in the correct position during each 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 help make suggestions about ways to help you relax.

## MAKING IMMOBILISATION MASKS

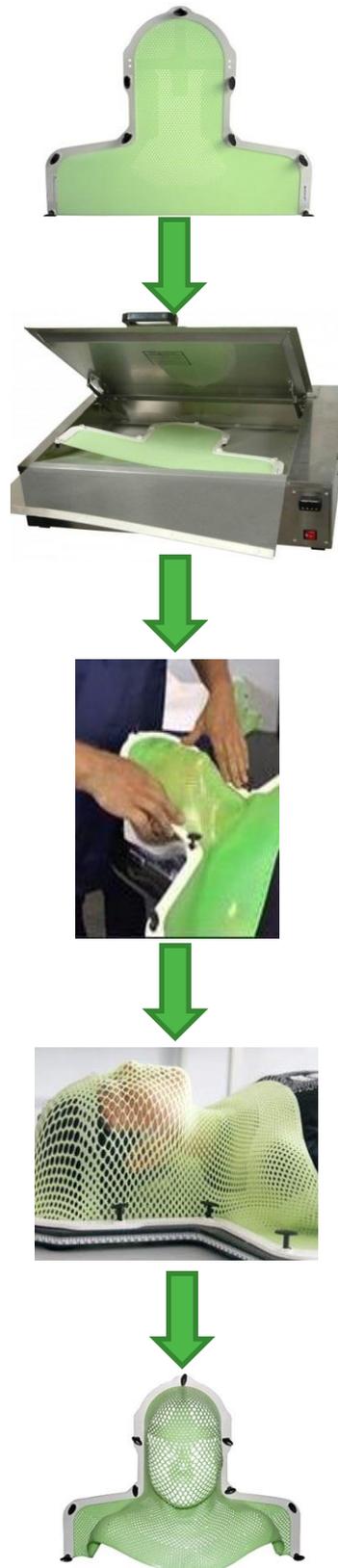
The masks are made from a thermoplastic material and has air holes (like a mesh) allowing you to see and breathe through it

The mesh material is heated in a warm water bath (70°C) for 3–5 minutes so it becomes soft and pliable

The mesh material is placed on your face and stretched downward slowly so that it moulds to fit your face exactly to form a mask. This may feel like having a warm towel being placed on your face; you will still be able to breathe

After a few minutes the material 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 treatment

You will wear your mask for your CT planning scan and for each of your radiation treatments



Images provided by Dr Vikneswary Batumalai and Ms Carol Wilder, Liverpool Cancer Therapy Centre, Liverpool Hospital, NSW, Australia.

## YOUR MASK AFTER TREATMENT

- All your identifications and marks will be removed from the mask at the end of your radiation treatment course.
- You will have the option to take the mask home if you wish.
- Some radiation therapy centres facilitate the transformation of radiation treatment masks into works of art as part of an art therapy program. Please ask your cancer care team if this interests you.

For more information to help you understand radiation therapy and the processes involved, please visit the [Beyond Five website](#), where you can watch the [Targeting Cancer video](#) on making of the immobilisation mask and how it is used during radiation treatment.

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