

IMMOBILISATION MASKS FOR HEAD AND NECK RADIATION THERAPY



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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.
- That the best possible protection for surrounding tissues and organs are protected.

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.

This will be the longest that you will be in the mask at any given time

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

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

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



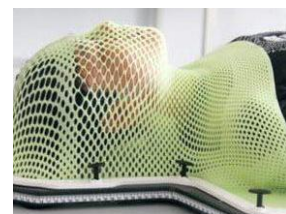
The mesh material is heated in a warm water bath (70°C) for 3–5 minutes so it becomes soft and pliable.



Before the mask is placed on your face the therapist will gently touch it on your arm so you are prepared for the warmth of the material. 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 will draw some markings on the mask that will be used to position you for treatment.



You will then have a quick CT before removing the mask. This is to allow for the radiation oncologist to plan your treatment

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



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 [Head and Neck Cancer Australia website](https://www.headandneckcancer.org.au), where you can watch the [Targeting Cancer video](#) on making of the immobilisation mask and how it is used during radiation treatment.

About Head and Neck Cancer Australia

Head and Neck Cancer Australia is the only national charity dedicated to providing free, trusted and easy to understand information, education and support to people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

We represent over 5,300 people who are newly diagnosed each year and more than 17,000 people who are living with Head and Neck Cancer across Australia.

We also lead the national effort to advocate for government support to encourage prevention, increase early diagnosis and improve the quality of life of people living with Head and Neck Cancer in Australia.

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