



# Proton Therapy

Reference Guide  
for Patients

# Table of Contents

## Welcome

This guide is designed to help you gain a better understanding of the proton therapy experience, including the number of steps involved, the Proton Therapy Care Team as well as frequently asked questions and who to contact for more information.

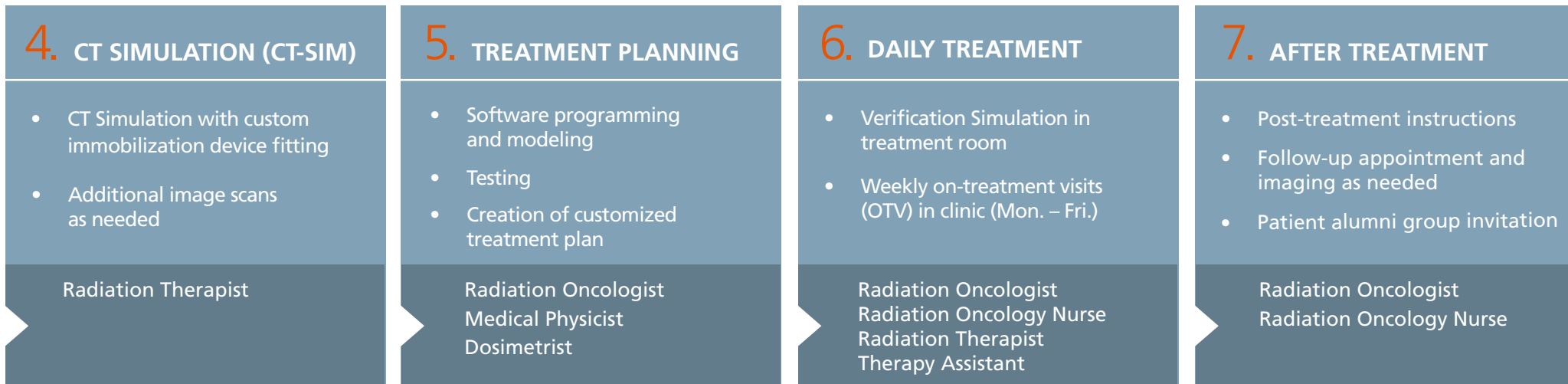
### Table of Contents

- Proton Therapy Experience .....3
- Proton Therapy Care Team .....6
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) .....9
- How to Stay Connected .....11



# Proton Therapy Experience

The proton therapy experience typically includes seven steps:



# Proton Therapy Experience Details

## 1. Initial Contact

Your first contact is with one of our scheduling specialists.

During the initial contact, you'll be asked for demographic and medical information such as your diagnosis and/or health history to determine if proton therapy may be a treatment option. The information is then provided to the center's clinical coordinator nurse team that follows up with you to gather additional information and medical records to create an official patient medical file.

## 2. Insurance Coverage

One of our business office representatives gathers necessary information from you to request insurance authorization for your treatment.

## 3. Medical Consult

Your medical consult is with a physician (radiation oncologist) who specializes in your type of cancer.

During this appointment, your recommended course of treatment will be provided and explained. If proton therapy is recommended, the next step usually is a CT Simulation (CT-Sim) appointment at the center. For some prostate cancer patients, a multiple-week course of hormone therapy may be required before the CT Simulation appointment.

## 4. CT Simulation (CT-Sim)

CT Simulation is CT imaging with customized immobilization device(s) to keep you in position during daily treatment sessions.

During this appointment as part of the setup, you may receive permanent body markings (small dots) to help with daily alignment during treatment. In some cases, you may have other medical imaging (MRI and/or PET scans).



# Proton Therapy Experience Details

## 5. Treatment Planning

Your physician, together with a team of dosimetrists and medical physicists, use your CT Simulation (CT-Sim) images to create a customized treatment plan, utilizing sophisticated software and technology.

The precise and detailed work for treatment planning averages from 10 to 14 business days. When your plan is ready, you will receive a call from a radiation therapist to schedule your daily treatments.

## 6. Daily Treatment

Your course of treatment can vary depending on type of tumor, size and location.

Your first day is called Verification Simulation (V-Sim), which provides time to meet with your radiation therapist and therapy assistants team, an introduction to daily setup, and validation of your positioning and images. On the second day, and remainder of your treatment appointments, the radiation therapists will validate your positioning and images before delivery of the proton beam.

## 7. After Treatment

Upon completing your last proton therapy treatment session, you'll receive final patient discharge papers from your radiation oncology nurse outlining your post-treatment steps.

A complete after-treatment plan is provided to you before your final treatment appointment and discussed with your radiation oncology nurse and care team.





# Proton Therapy Care Team



Radiation  
Oncology  
Nurse



Radiation  
Oncologist  
(Physician)



Radiation  
Therapist



Medical  
Physicist



Patient



Clinical  
Coordinator



Dosimetrist



Business  
Office Staff

# Individual Proton Therapy Care Team Details



## Radiation Oncologist

A physician who oversees your proton therapy treatment and works with other members of the proton therapy team to develop your treatment plan and monitor your treatment.

Your radiation oncologist also works closely with other cancer doctors such as medical oncologists and surgeons who treat cancer patients.



## Radiation Oncology Nurse

This nurse is specially trained in cancer care and works closely with your radiation oncologist and other care team members.

She or he will explain possible side effects of your treatment and how to address and minimize them, as well as provide education and support for you and your family.



## Radiation Therapist

Specially trained professionals who administer daily proton treatment.

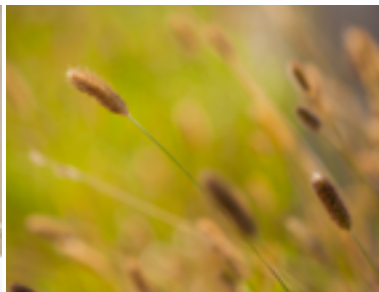
At Scripps Proton Therapy Center, radiation therapists also work with patients on the development of any immobilization device such as special masks or other custom fitted devices to hold the head or body still during treatment sessions.



## Medical Physicist

This medically trained scientist works with your physician (radiation oncologist) during treatment planning and delivery.

The medical physicist oversees work of dosimetrists and helps ensure that treatments are properly tailored for each patient.



# Individual Proton Therapy Team Details



## Dosimetrist

This specially trained professional's responsibilities include digital development of your customized treatment plan.

The highly complex software-generated plans include proton intensity by tumor layer and multiple locations within the tumor for maximum treatment effectiveness and minimal radiation exposure to healthy tissue.



## Business Office Staff

These professionals gather needed demographic information during your initial consultation and help coordinate communications on-site among the administrative and medical teams.

They also handle the process of health insurance review and/or authorization for proton therapy treatment.



## Clinical Coordinators

This team of nurses speaks with you by telephone to gather medical records and images to determine if proton therapy may be a treatment option.

They work closely with business office staff in the early steps.





# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: How long is a medical consult?**

**A:** A total appointment time can take a few hours, including time required on-site before to update your medical records and other information, and time with a radiation oncologist.

**Q: What do I need to bring to my medical consult?**

**A:** Please bring completed paperwork that was sent to you, as well as insurance card(s), imaging CD(s) and any other information requested ahead of this appointment. We will call you with a reminder the day before your medical consult.

**Q: What is a CT-Sim?**

**A:** Short for "CT Simulation," this is an appointment in which you are placed on a treatment table replica in the exact position needed for your specific tumor and tumor location. If needed for your treatment plan, a custom immobilization device such as a mask, headrest or other device is fitted.

**Q: How long does a CT-Sim take?**

**A:** Up to three hours if additional images are needed.

**Q: What is a V-Sim?**

**A:** Short for "Verification Simulation" this is when your treatment and setup are verified before live treatment (beam on) to ensure accuracy and the precision of all calculations, measurements and patient positioning.

**Q: How long does a V-Sim take?**

**A:** Approximately 30 minutes.

**Q: How long does creation of a customized treatment plan take?**

**A:** The average time for most patients is from 10 to 14 days once all needed images and medical records are obtained.

**Q: How many proton therapy treatment sessions will I have?**

**A:** The number of individual sessions depends on your type of cancer and location, as well as if treatment is concurrent with other treatments such as hormone therapy or chemotherapy. Please be sure to discuss with your care team any concerns you may have about pre-booked flights or other date-specific commitments.

**Q: How long is a proton therapy treatment session?**

**A:** The average treatment session is 30 minutes, with the majority of time used for changing clothes and being prepped and positioned on the treatment table.

**Q: Why do I need a badge to check-in for treatment?**

**A:** The system alerts the care team of your arrival.

**Q: Are pets allowed?**

**A:** Only service animals specially trained to aid a person with a disability are allowed.

**Q: What is an OTV?**

**A:** An "On Treatment Visit" is a weekly consult with your radiation oncologist (physician) during your course of proton therapy treatment to follow progress and address any questions or concerns you may have. Your radiation oncologist may modify your treatment plan based on how your cancer is responding to treatment.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What phone number do I call to learn if the center accepts my health insurance plan?**

**A: +1-858-549-7400** (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PT)

**Q: What happens once my treatment is completed?**

**A:** Your radiation oncology nurse will provide you with your medical discharge papers and after-care instructions. A bell ringing ceremony with your care team is traditionally held to celebrate your completion of proton therapy treatment.

**Q: How do I request my medical records?**

**A:** Please call the center **+1-858-549-7400** (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PT) or email us **SPTCHIMStaffDG@scrippshealth.org**

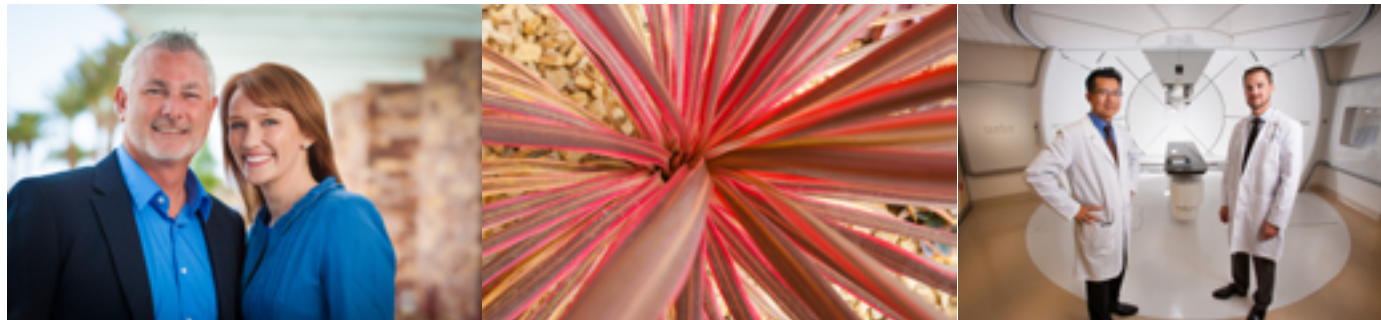
**Q: When is my follow-up appointment after completing treatment?**

**A:** Follow-up appointments are typically discussed during your discharge process.

**Q: Are there other ways to be involved in the center during or after treatment?**

**A:** Patients, family members and others interested in proton therapy can stay connected to the Scripps Proton Therapy Center by becoming a member of SPTConnect. Our members enjoy learning about the latest in proton therapy, keeping in touch with other members, sharing their own stories and more. You can volunteer to become a Scripps Proton Therapy Patient Champion and help support new and current patients or attend an event or support group. Current and former patients plan social activities on a regular basis and publicize the details in the center's lobby. Patients benefit from sharing their experiences, answering questions and providing emotional support to each other. You can also stay in touch with patients, physicians, staff and each other through our social media group on Facebook at: [facebook.com/scrippsprotontherapycenter](https://facebook.com/scrippsprotontherapycenter).

For more information, visit [scripps.org/sptconnect](https://scripps.org/sptconnect)



# How to Stay Connected

## SPTConnect

SPTConnect is an opportunity for current and previous Scripps Proton Therapy Center patients, their families and others interested in proton therapy treatment to stay connected.

Our members enjoy learning about the latest in proton therapy, keeping in touch with other members, sharing their own stories and more.

To contact us at the center, call [+1-858-549-7400](tel:+18585497400)

To learn more about SPTConnect, [go here](#)

SCRIPPS PROTON THERAPY  
**CONNECT**

