



**PATIENT EDUCATION**

## **Merkel cell carcinoma & radiation therapy**

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

### **What is this cancer?**

Merkel cell carcinoma is an uncommon, faster-moving skin cancer, more often in older or immune-suppressed people, frequently on sun-exposed skin. Surgery removes the tumor and often samples the sentinel node. Radiation to the scar and sometimes the node basin is commonly recommended because this cancer can return locally. Immunotherapy is used for advanced disease.

### **What you may notice**

- A fast-growing, painless, shiny or red-purple nodule
- A node that appears near a recent skin surgery
- Immune suppression (transplant, CLL, HIV) — tell us
- Confusion with a cyst — biopsy is what tells

### **Usual care — the big picture**

Dermatologic or surgical oncology leads excision. Sentinel-node biopsy is often advised. This is not treated like a routine basal cell.

**Where CureRays may fit.** CureRays provides image-guided radiation to the scar and, when indicated, nodes. Superficial techniques may be used for selected superficial beds; deeper plans are used when nodes or depth require them. Confirm the pathology and node status before we lock a field.

### **What radiation treatment usually involves**

- Pathology and operative-note review
- Simulation of the scar with margin; bolus if the skin needs full dose
- A multi-week course in many cases
- Skin-care teaching; coordination with immunotherapy if you are on it

### **Immobilization — why it matters**

A shield or mold may protect nearby tissue (for example, the eye). Immobilization keeps the scar flat and reproducible.



### Side effects you should know about

Effects depend on the area treated, the dose, and other therapies. This list is typical, not a promise and not complete. Confirm your personal list with your clinician.

- **Skin reaction** in a generous field — expected.
- **Fatigue.**
- **Lymphedema risk** if nodes are treated — see that handout.
- **Rare / serious.** A new lump, fever on immunotherapy, or a wound that opens.

### What this means for you at CureRays

Ask why the field is larger than the scar you see. Merkel planning is deliberately generous compared with many basal-cell fields.

### Questions to ask

- What did the sentinel node show?
- Which basin, if any, will you treat?
- How does this interact with immunotherapy?
- What skin checks do I need for the rest of my life?

### How to schedule or learn more

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