

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT PROTON THERAPY

Proton therapy is a highly-targeted form of radiation therapy that is effective for cancerous tumors throughout the body. This cancer-fighting technology is non-invasive and may reduce side effects, allowing patients to maintain their quality of life during and after treatment compared to other forms of conventional radiation therapy.

As new patients and their loved ones consider treatment plans, many may have questions about proton therapy, how it works, who is a good candidate for this type of treatment, and how it differs from other forms of radiation treatment. To address these misconceptions, below are common questions about proton therapy.



QUESTION #1: IS PROTON THERAPY EXPERIMENTAL?

Proton therapy has been used to treat tumors for nearly 60 years, and in 1988, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved proton therapy for the treatment of cancers.



QUESTION #2: DOES INSURANCE COVER PROTON THERAPY?

Yes, many insurance plans cover proton therapy. Texas Center for Proton Therapy provides patients with financial counselors who help them to navigate the insurance approval process and be an advocate for their health. Our financial counselors work with patients to appeal their request. However, the process of getting proton therapy covered by insurance may take time and go through a few rounds of appeals depending on a patient's insurance plan, cancer type, and stage of their disease. Once approved, patients may begin receiving treatment.

Texas Center for Proton Therapy participates in a wide range of insurance plans as well as Medicare, Medicaid, and select Health Insurance Marketplace plans. Visit our insurance information page to learn more about the plans we accept at [texascenterforprotontherapy.com/get-started/paying-for-care](https://www.texascenterforprotontherapy.com/get-started/paying-for-care).



QUESTION #3: DOES PROTON THERAPY NOT WORK ON CERTAIN TYPES OF CANCER OR AT STAGES OF THE DISEASE?

Proton therapy is used to treat a wide variety of cancer types. Anywhere conventional X-ray therapy is used, proton therapy may be a better option. A few forms commonly treated include brain, breast, esophageal, head and neck, gynecological, liver, lung, lymphoma, ocular, pancreatic, prostate, sarcoma, and many others. To determine if proton therapy is an option for them, patients can consult with their physician or learn more at www.texascenterforprotontherapy.com/get-started. Patients can also request an appointment at Texas Center for Proton Therapy or their nearest proton center, as many do not require a physician referral.



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QUESTION #4: CAN ONLY CHILDREN RECEIVE PROTON THERAPY?

Both children and adults can be treated using proton therapy. While solid tumor pediatric cancer cases are one of the top groups that benefit from proton therapy, it can also be used to treat adults with cancerous tumors. Because proton therapy precisely-targets tumors, it helps to lower the risk of toxicity or damage to healthy tissue, protects neurological functions like speech or memory, avoids radiation to areas previously treated or is at a higher risk of recurrence, and allows adults to continue daily activities in between treatments with minimal side effects.



QUESTION #5: IS PROTON THERAPY ONLY USED TO TREAT LOCALIZED OR SMALL TUMORS?

Proton therapy can treat a variety of tumors in the breast, liver, lung, pancreas, prostate, and skin. It is also used to treat highly complex diseases such as:

- Medulloblastoma, a rare form of brain cancer
- Eye cancers, like uveal melanoma or choroidal melanoma
- Cancers in the central nervous system, like chordoma, chondrosarcoma, and malignant meningioma

To treat these diseases and complex tumors, Texas Center for Proton Therapy is equipped with a large machine, called a gantry, which can rotate 360 degrees around patients in precise coordination with a robotic treatment table. Using high-strength magnets, the gantry precisely delivers proton beam radiation to the tumor based on its shape, size, and depth.

One type of proton therapy, called pencil-beam scanning, is commonly used for tumors that are complex, irregularly shaped, difficult to reach, wrapped around other structures, or located near sensitive areas such as the brain and spine, head and neck, or chest. Texas Center for Proton Therapy also utilizes advanced image-guidance techniques to ensure accurate treatment.



QUESTION #6: IS PROTON THERAPY BETTER THAN OTHER FORMS OF X-RAY RADIATION TREATMENT?

In many cases, proton therapy may be the best form of treatment depending on the patient, cancer type, and stage of disease progression. However, whether it is proton therapy or standard radiation, all X-ray radiation treatments are designed to treat and kill cancerous cells. The benefits of proton therapy derive from its precision and ability to minimize radiation exposure to surrounding healthy organs and tissues.

Proton therapy helps to treat areas of the body sensitive to radiation exposure where highly complex cancer types are located such as prostate, left-sided breast, and the central nervous system which includes many head and neck cancers. Additionally, this form of treatment can reduce potential acute and long-term side effects such as hair loss, fatigue, nausea, headaches, and skin changes. Patients should consult with their physician to discuss the best radiation treatment option for them and their individual cancer type.

Sources: American Society of Clinical Oncology, Johns Hopkins Proton Therapy Center, National Association of Proton Therapy, Proton Brotherhood of the Balloon, and Texas Center for Proton Therapy

