Stronach Regional Cancer Centre
New Patient Information
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INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this it is likely that your world has suddenly changed. You or a friend or family member has been told that they have cancer. A cancer diagnosis may affect many aspects of your life: physical, financial, emotional, occupational, and spiritual. If you have been diagnosed, remember that you are a person who happens to have cancer; cancer is not who you are and it does not define who you will be. It is normal at this time to feel scared, anxious or unsettled. Our team is here to help.

At the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, we work hard to include patient and family feedback in all of the materials that we create. The New Patient Information Booklet was written using information that patients, families and healthcare providers gave us. We hope that this guide will help you know what to expect at each step of your experience. The information will help you prepare for your appointments and treatments. When patients and families are informed, they can be true partners in their care. As you review the information in the booklet, you may think of more questions. Please make a list of your questions and bring them to your appointments. Everyone on our team wants to make sure you have the information you need, so don’t be afraid to ask questions. This booklet is a resource for you and your family, but it is not intended to replace the direct care provided by the team.

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre (SRCC)

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre opened in 2010 to serve the 1.2 million people of Newmarket and the surrounding region. We offer the most up-to-date cancer screening, diagnostic testing and also provide leading edge radiation therapy and chemotherapy treatments. We are ranked one of the top performing regional cancer programs by Cancer Care Ontario.

Hours of Operation

Monday to Friday (except holidays) from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Radiation Therapy treatment hours are 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Important Phone Numbers

The Southlake Regional Health Centre main phone number is 905-895-4521. Once you are connected, enter extension 6820 and you will access our voice menu.
Appointment Changes

If you need to cancel or change an appointment, call our bookings clerk as soon as possible, preferably 48 hours in advance at 905-895-4521,

• Radiation treatment - ext. 6040
• Chemotherapy treatment - ext. 6501.

If you are cancelling your appointment due to illness, please call your nurse.

Directions and Parking

SRCC is located on the west side of the Southlake Regional Health Centre, at the corner of Prospect Street and Davis Drive. There are three entrances, two on the Lobby Level and one on Level 2 of the attached parking garage.

Parking is available on the visitors’ levels of the Parking Garage. Parking rates are charged per half-hour up to the daily maximum. The rates are posted on the machines.

Multi-day discounted parking passes include in-and-out privileges and expire after a year. These may be purchased from the Parking Office located in the hospital near the Tim Hortons. Private paid parking lots are also available.

If you have a physical disability you can apply for a special parking permit from the Ministry of Transportation. You can get more information from the Ministry of Transportation’s web site at www.mto.gov.on.ca or from a social worker.

Free parking is available to veterans with a valid Veterans Affairs Health Benefits Card. Veterans can visit the Parking Office before they leave the hospital to have their parking ticket validated.

Cancer Centre Layout

The cancer centre can be a little confusing to get around when you first come to your appointments. If you are ever having trouble, just ask any staff member or a volunteer in a blue jacket and they will be more than happy to help you. The main entrance is on the Lobby Level, Radiation Therapy is on Level G, Clinic and Lab Appointments are on Level 1 and Chemotherapy Treatments are on Level 2.
Transportation

Getting to the Cancer Centre can be difficult for some people. If you need help getting to your appointments, the Canadian Cancer Society offers volunteer drivers to pick you up and give you a friendly drive to the Cancer Centre. Just call them at 1-800-263-6750 to ask about the Wheels of Hope office closest to your home. There is a fee for this service.

Some medications given during your treatment may make you drowsy. Please ask your doctor or nurse if it is safe for you to drive on your own or if you should arrange for transportation.

Cost of Services/Insured Services

When you register for your appointment at the cancer centre, it is important that you tell us about any healthcare insurance coverage you have. Not all medications are covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). We have a Drug Reimbursement Specialist to help you get reimbursed for medications that are not covered by OHIP.

Change of Information

Please let us know at every visit if any of your contact information has changed:

- Your name
- Your home address
- Your telephone numbers
- Your family doctor or other doctors you have seen
- Your emergency contact person’s name and/or phone number

Confidentiality

You will be asked to give us information about yourself. We will make sure that your personal information is only collected, used, and/or shared for reasons related to your care.
**Patient Safety**

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre strives to always ‘Put Patients First’ by providing safe and effective care for those we serve. Your safety is our top priority. You and your family can make your healthcare safer by being active, involved, and informed. We encourage you to ask questions and never hesitate to speak up if you have concerns.

One way we keep you safe is to always make sure we identify our patients. To do this properly, you will have your photograph taken at your first visit. This photograph will be used so the healthcare team can identify you throughout your treatment.

Other patient safety measures you will see include:

- “Double check” of all medication and therapy prescriptions before you get treatment
- A falls prevention program to identify patients who may be at risk of falling
- Encouraging patients and families to speak up with any concerns

**Smoking Cessation**

While you are at the centre, your healthcare team will ask you if you use tobacco products, and if you do, they will advise you to stop smoking. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to help your cancer treatment work better. You can talk to your care team about how to quit or reduce smoking or how to stay smoke free. They can connect you with resources and information. Your family doctor and pharmacist are also able to prescribe quit aids or medication and connect you with counseling.

Southlake is a smoke-free facility. Smoking, including e-cigarettes (vaping), is not permitted anywhere on hospital grounds or within 9 metres of any entrance or exit as per the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Electronic Cigarettes Act. Anyone smoking on hospital grounds could be fined up to $1000.

**Fragrance Free**

Do not wear perfume or other scented products when coming to the SRCC. Scented personal products may affect patients, employees and visitors who have asthma or have allergies. Patients on chemotherapy may be more affected by these smells.

**Asking Questions**

We want you to be a partner in decisions made about your treatment. The best way to be involved is to ask questions whenever you are unsure. If you think of questions, make sure to write them down and bring them with you to your next appointment. To make sure you don’t miss any information, bring a family member or a friend to take notes for you.
YOUR FIRST VISIT

Your first visit to the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre will be about 2-4 hours. At this appointment you will meet members of your healthcare team. The team will review your medical history with you, arrange any tests you need, and answer your questions. You and your team will work together to choose the treatment plan that is best for you.

What to bring to your first appointment:

- A family member or someone to take notes for you
- Your current Ontario Health Card (bring every visit)
- All medicine you are currently taking, including prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, minerals, and any herbal supplements, all in their original containers
- A list of any allergies
- Name, address and phone number of your family doctor
- Name, address and phone number of your pharmacy
- Group and policy numbers for your drug insurance plan(s)
- Eyeglasses, hearing aids, and/or any other devices that you use
- Snacks, meals and drinks or money to purchase these
- If you are diabetic, bring meals, insulin and supplies
- Anything about your wishes such as an Advance Care Plan or Power of Attorney for Personal Care

What to expect at your first visit:

- You will register at the Welcome Desk on the lobby level of the Cancer Centre
- Your photograph will be taken and kept in your personal health record, to correctly identify you
- You will be sent to the Out Patient Clinic on Level 1
- A volunteer or nurse will take you to an examination room
- The nurse may take your height, weight, ask some health related questions and may have you complete some forms
- Your oncologist will meet with you, ask you about your health history and may examine you
- If you need any more tests, they will be arranged for you
- You may need another appointment with your oncologist to decide on the best treatment plan with you
Your Symptoms Matter – Telling us How you are Feeling

Each time you come to an appointment (other than daily radiation therapy treatments), you will complete the *Your Symptoms Matter* assessment at the kiosk. By letting your healthcare team know how you are feeling, you can both work together to monitor and manage your physical and emotional symptoms.

Volunteers will help you get started and will remind you each time. You will need your health card to complete the assessment at the kiosk. You can also get the *Your Symptoms Matter* assessment in paper form in 37 different languages to help you answer the questions at the kiosk.

Clinical Trials and Research

Clinical trials are research studies to test new procedures, drugs or equipment. SRCC patients are involved in many different trials. Trials are important for discoveries that can improve the quality of life for patients and can lead to better treatments. If you have the type of cancer that is part of a study, you may be given information and asked to consider signing up. You are under no obligation to take part in a clinical trial.

If you are interested in learning more about participating in a clinical trial, please talk with your nurse or Oncologist.
CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENTS

Chemotherapy is a cancer treatment that uses drugs to damage and stop cancer cells from growing. Chemotherapy drugs can come in different forms. Some can be taken as a pill at home. Others are given intravenously (into a vein) or injected with a needle.

The drugs that are prescribed by your oncologist affect all cells that are growing quickly, not just cancer cells. Normal fast growing cells such as hair follicles, the cells that line your mouth or gut and blood cells are also affected. That is why you get treatment side effects. The normal healthy cells can heal and regrow better than cancer cells. The time between treatments, also known as cycles, gives time for your normal cells to heal.

You will usually be scheduled for an appointment in the Out-patient Clinic (first floor) one day and the chemotherapy treatment the next day. On the first day you will have blood work, complete Your Symptoms Matter, and meet with your medical oncologist. You will have to wait about one hour for your blood test results before you see your oncologist. The main purpose of this visit is to make sure that you are well enough to safely go ahead with chemotherapy.

The next day you will come back to get your chemotherapy treatment (second floor), or restart your oral chemotherapy at home as prescribed.

Intravenous chemotherapy (into a vein) treatments can take thirty minutes to ten hours. Your nurse will tell you in advance how long it will take.

Preparing for Chemotherapy Treatment

You will be scheduled to attend a Pre-Chemotherapy Teaching class before you start your treatment. The class is taught by a Registered Nurse and will help you and your family to prepare for treatment and know what to expect.

When you come for your treatments you should dress in layers because you may feel warm or cool at times during your treatment. You can’t leave the chemotherapy unit while you have the intravenous drugs running. You can bring one person to stay with you during your treatments but for safety reasons, children under 12 years of age are not allowed in the chemotherapy treatment area at any time.

You should bring a bottle of water, snacks and lunch, if your appointment is over the lunch hour. If you have a support person with you, they can buy food and drinks for you at nearby food outlets. Other items that might make you feel more comfortable are an extra pair of socks, your own music and headphones or games to help pass the time.
**Immunotherapy**

Another type of therapy you may have heard about it immunotherapy. It is different than chemotherapy because it uses your own immune system to fight cancer. Immunotherapy is sometimes called biotherapy. Depending on your type and stage of cancer, this treatment may be an option for you. Immunotherapy may be prescribed by your oncologist alone or together with chemotherapy. This treatment is also given in the chemotherapy suite.

**Medication Refills**

Before the end of your chemotherapy appointment, please make sure you have enough medication to last until your next visit with the doctor. If you need a refill, please call your community pharmacy and ask that they fax a prescription refill request to the Cancer Clinic at 905-952-3051. It can take up to 2 days to process a refill. For your safety, you should use the same community pharmacy for all of your prescriptions.
RADIATION THERAPY PLANNING AND TREATMENT

Radiation Therapy is a treatment that uses high energy x-rays to damage and stop cancer cells from growing. The radiation cannot tell the difference between cancer cells and normal cells, so normal fast growing cells are also affected. This is why you may get side effects related to the treatment area. Normal cells can heal and regrow so your side effects will get better over time. Radiation therapy is usually given over a number of weeks to reduce the possibility of side effects. If you get side effects, they will start gradually and continue after the last treatment.

Your radiation oncologist will prescribe a treatment schedule that is best for you and the kind of cancer that you have. Patients who come to the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre for radiation will have a one-on-one education appointment with a radiation therapist called the Pre-Radiation Planning Appointment (PRPA). You will get important information to make sure you are prepared and know what to expect at every step. The next two steps are radiation therapy planning and treatment.

Radiation Therapy Planning

Your first appointment is to plan your radiation treatment. You will have a CT Simulation that will give the radiation oncologist and radiation therapist the information they need to accurately outline your treatment area.

The radiation therapist will use marks on your skin to outline your treatment area and position. These marks can wash off, so you will also get very tiny permanent tattoo marks (freckle-sized) using a fine needle. The radiation therapist will explain this procedure to you, and answer your questions. The appointment will take about one hour.

You will be contacted with the date and time of your first radiation treatment appointment by phone. It can take up to two weeks for your treatment to start.
**Radiation Treatment**

The first radiation treatment appointment will usually be the longest (30-45 minutes). The radiation therapist and other members of the team will check all the details of your treatment plan before you get any radiation treatment.

Your regular daily treatment appointments are usually 15-30 minutes, depending on your treatment prescription and plan. The treatment area will be verified each time.

Getting a radiation treatment is like having an x-ray. You won’t see or feel anything, and you won’t become radioactive. It’s important that you breathe normally and remain in the treatment position, and try to relax. Please feel free to bring in your own music, which can be played while you are having your treatment.

The radiation therapists will not stay in the room, but can see you on a video screen just outside the room. They can also hear you all the time, so you can talk to the radiation therapist if you need to.

**Radiation Treatment Review**

You will see your radiation oncologist for a Radiation Treatment Review once per week while you are on treatment. Please remember to complete *Your Symptoms Matter* before your appointment. Write down any questions that you have for your doctor and bring them to your review appointment.
PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY AND PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAM

Psychosocial oncology is a whole-person approach to cancer care that addresses a range of needs. This cancer specialty helps people affected by cancer at any stage.

Palliative care is a team approach to care that is appropriate at any time for an individual and/or family member living with a life-limiting illness. It may be part of, but is not the same as, end-of-life care. SRCC offers a combined Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care program with a dedicated team of healthcare professionals.

The Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care Program team helps patients and their families improve their quality of life. The team works together to help patients at any stage with pain and other physical, social, psychological, emotional, practical and spiritual problems.

The Psychosocial and Palliative Care Program offers:
- A Pain and Symptom Management Clinic to help improve overall wellbeing
- A Psychosocial Assessment Clinic to help patients with emotional concerns
- Individual counseling sessions with a dietitian, a social worker, a chaplain/spiritual care specialist, a psychiatrist or a medical psychotherapist
- Group Support Programs to help with memory, breathing, life after treatment, bereavement and stress reduction

Ask any member of your healthcare team which program or service member may help you and how to get a referral.
PATIENT RESOURCES

Patient and Family Resource Centre
The Patient and Family Resource Centre is located next to the Welcome Centre on the lobby level of the Cancer Centre. It provides free access to current, reliable and accurate health information, and internet access.

The Patient and Family Resource Centre is open and staffed by trained volunteers Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The information provided by the Resource Centre is not a substitute for talking with your healthcare team.

The Quiet Room
The Cancer Centre offers a Quiet Room for patients, family, staff and volunteers. It is located on the first level, near the main elevators. The room is available for quiet reflection, prayer and meditation.

The Healing Garden
The Healing Garden is located on the west side of the cancer centre. You can get to it from the Prospect Street exit (lobby level) or through the Radiation Therapy Department on the ground level. It is a large area with flowers, trees, a fountain and benches and is a quiet, calm place to spend time.

Food Services
The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre does not have its own cafeteria or food outlets. You can bring your own food and snacks in case you get hungry during your visit. If you want to buy food,

- Druxy’s is the closest to the Cancer Centre, on the second floor bridge connecting the garage building to the hospital
- Tim Horton’s has two locations in the main hospital building; one on Level 1 and another on Level 2
- Subway restaurant is located in the main hospital on Level 1
- Aquene Cafeteria is located on the main hospital Level 1

Some of these services are open seven days a week for patients, visitors and families. Hours of operation are posted.

Retail Services
The Gift Shoppe is located on Level 1 of the main hospital and offers an assortment of gifts and necessities such as clothing, toiletries, cards, magazines and flower arrangements. There is also an assortment of vendors in the same area that change daily.
**Wigs/Head Coverings**

Some cancer treatments can cause thinning or loss of hair. Hair usually grows back after the end of treatment, and sometimes even sooner. You can ask your oncologist if you have any questions or concerns about possible hair loss from your treatment.

There is a selection of donated wigs and head coverings in the chemotherapy suite “wig room” for patients without private health insurance. A volunteer on Level 2 will be happy to help you to make a choice that is most comfortable for you. Many people choose not to cover their heads.

**Before you buy a wig:**

If you have extended health insurance policy check your policy. You may be covered for all or part of the cost of the wig, but will need a prescription. Ask your doctor for a prescription for a wig before you buy one. Send the prescription and wig receipt to the insurance company for reimbursement.
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A diagnosis of cancer affects the entire family. Support is an important part of treatment. There are many patient and family support groups in the community that can help you. The volunteers in the Patient and Family Resource Centre are happy to help you find information about the programs close to you.

Other helpful information is available online at the websites below.

**Cancer Care Ontario** - [www.cancercare.on.ca](http://www.cancercare.on.ca)

**Canadian Cancer Society** - [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)
Provides information on all types of cancer and services for patients and families. Call toll-free at 1 888 939-3333, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m

**Cancer Chat Canada** - [https://cancerchat.desouzainstitute.com/](https://cancerchat.desouzainstitute.com/)
Professionally-led online support groups for Canadians affected by cancer.

**Cancer and Work Canada** - [www.cancerandwork.ca](http://www.cancerandwork.ca)
To help cancer survivors with returning, remaining, changing work or looking for work after a diagnosis of cancer.

**Canadian Virtual Hospice** - [www.virtualhospice.ca](http://www.virtualhospice.ca)
Information and support on palliative care, end-of-life care, loss and grief

**Lung Cancer Canada** - [www.lungcancercanada.ca](http://www.lungcancercanada.ca)

**Colorectal Cancer** - [www.coloncancer.ca](http://www.coloncancer.ca)

**Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada** - [http://www.llscanada.org](http://www.llscanada.org)

**Prostate Cancer Canada** - [www.prostatecancercanada.ca](http://www.prostatecancercanada.ca)

**Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation** - [www.cbcf.org](http://www.cbcf.org)
How to find us:

For more information contact:

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Southlake Regional Health Centre
596 Davis Drive
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Tel: 905-895-4521, ext. 2290
www.southlakeregional.org/cancer