About this booklet
This booklet is for patients having radiation therapy treatment at Alfred Radiation Oncology.

It provides general information about radiation therapy, to help you understand and prepare for your treatment.

If you need more information please ask your radiation oncologist or the other staff during your next visit.

You may find it useful to bring this booklet with you to your appointments.

Contact Numbers - During Business Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Enquiries - Reception</td>
<td>03 9076 2337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>03 9076 3465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment Bookings Coordinator</td>
<td>03 9076 8013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Hours or Weekends

The Alfred Switchboard                       | 03 9076 2000     

Please ask to speak to the radiation oncology registrar on call
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1. Welcome to Alfred Radiation Oncology

Alfred Radiation Oncology is a radiation therapy service provided at The Alfred by Alfred Health. Alfred Health Radiation Oncology was established at The Alfred in 1992. In 2006 the organisation was expanded to include a second service, Gippsland Radiation Oncology, which is located in the Gippsland Cancer Care Centre, Latrobe Regional Hospital.

Both the metropolitan and regional services have a team of highly experienced and specialised staff, utilising state-of-the-art equipment. This ensures that the service is at the forefront of radiation treatment, providing the best possible advice, treatment and follow-up for our patients

As well as conventional external beam radiotherapy Alfred Radiation Oncology specialises in stereotactic radiation therapy, radiosurgery and brachytherapy.

In combination with The Alfred, a major tertiary referral and teaching institution associated with Monash University, Alfred Radiation Oncology is able to provide a wide range of cancer services to its patients.

2. What is radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy is treatment using radiation, such as x-rays and electrons, to kill or damage cancer cells to stop them from growing and multiplying. Radiation therapy can also be used to treat a variety of benign (non-cancerous) diseases.

Radiation therapy is a localised treatment as it only affects the area being treated. Treatment can range from a single session to multiple sessions lasting up to 8 weeks, depending on the type of treatment.
3. How does radiation therapy work?

The aim of radiation therapy is to maximise the damage to cancerous cells, while trying to spare the surrounding healthy tissue.

Radiation therapy damages the cancer cells in the area being treated. The radiation damages the DNA (genetic code) of cancer cells which makes them unable to grow or divide. As cancer cells are more sensitive to radiation than normal cells, the normal cells are able to repair some of the damage and survive.

4. Why should I have radiation therapy?

Many people will have radiation therapy as a part of their treatment when they are diagnosed with cancer. Across most cancers, radiation therapy is one of the most useful curative treatment options alongside surgery. Research shows that at least one in two people will benefit from this non-invasive treatment technique.

Radiation therapy can be used in different combinations with surgery, chemotherapy or other drug therapy and has several different aims:

- Cure
- Control
- Symptom relief
5. Who are my radiation therapy team?

The radiation therapy team responsible for your care and treatment involves many specialist staff:

**Radiation Oncologist**
A doctor who specialises in the treatment of cancer and other conditions using radiation therapy.

**Radiation Oncology Registrar**
A doctor who is training to be a specialist radiation oncologist.

**Radiation Therapist**
A health professional who plans and delivers radiation therapy according to the radiation oncologist’s prescription.

**Radiation Oncology Nurse**
A nurse who assesses and cares for patients during radiation therapy treatment. Nurses help with the management of side effects and referrals to other support services.

**Medical Physicist**
Physicists who run routine quality assurance procedures on the equipment and machines to ensure safe and accurate treatment.

**Administration Staff**
Staff who perform a variety of tasks including assisting patients with medical appointments, and managing patient records.

**Students**
We are a teaching organisation. Students may be involved in your care while under the supervision of qualified staff. If you do not wish for students to be present please inform staff.
6. What is the radiation therapy process?

Step 1 - Initial consultation
- Fill out registration forms
- Consultation with radiation oncologist

Step 2 - Planning (Simulation/CT) appointment
- Meet with radiation therapist
- Decide on positioning for treatment
- May involve:
  - Making equipment to aid positioning
  - CT scan
  - Taking measurement & photos of your position

Step 3 - First day of treatment
- Meet with radiation therapists
- Lie in same position as at Planning appointment
- Radiation treatment delivered
- Meet with nurses after treatment to discuss side effects

Step 4 - Daily treatment appointment
- Radiation treatment delivered by radiation therapists
- Weekly review with radiation oncologist or registrar and nurse

Step 5 - Follow-up appointment
- At a specified time after treatment has finished
- Consultation with your radiation oncologist
Step 1: Initial consultation
This is the first time you meet with your radiation oncologist to discuss your medical history, treatment options and agree on a care plan.

Step 2: Planning (simulation/CT) appointment
This appointment, which may also be referred to as “simulation”, is required to plan your radiation therapy treatment and may take up to 60 minutes. It is usually done by taking a CT scan of the area requiring treatment.

Please report to the lower ground floor reception on arrival.

At your planning appointment you will meet with the radiation therapists to determine the best and most comfortable way to position you for treatment. This position is important because it will be replicated daily for the duration of your treatment.

Depending on the area of your body we are treating we may need to make personalised equipment, such as a face mask, to stabilise your position. This equipment helps to keep you comfortable and still during the treatment and makes the treatment more accurate.

Once you are positioned the CT scan will be taken. Everyone will leave the room for a couple of minutes when the CT-scan is being taken. Your radiation oncologist will use this information to assist them in defining the area to be treated.

The radiation therapists will then record measurements and take photos, which help us to position you accurately for treatment and guide us to the area of the body your radiation oncologist wants to treat.
A list of radiation therapy treatment appointments may be provided at your planning appointment or on your first day of treatment.

You may bring a family member or friend to your planning appointment. You may find their presence comforting, although they will have to leave the room during the short time that the CT scan is in use.

**Skin marks\Tattoos**
Traditionally most radiation therapy centres worldwide would use either tattoos or skin markings to assist in daily setup of patients receiving radiation therapy.

Since 2012 Alfred Radiation Oncology has not used tattoos for any patients receiving radiation treatment and as of 2017 many patients do not require marks on their skin for treatment. This is because at Alfred Radiation Oncology we can use surface guided imaging to help us to position you very accurately every day at treatment.

Surface guided imaging uses a three dimensional optical imaging system, so there is no additional exposure to radiation, which provides the radiation therapists with an image of your body surface to monitor your position before and during treatment.

If lines are drawn on your skin, they will not be marked on your face or neck. You will be instructed on how to maintain the marks if required.

**Planning your radiation therapy treatment**
Between your planning appointment and your first treatment a radiation therapy treatment plan is created. This can take up to 1-2 weeks depending on the complexity of your treatment plan.
Step 3: First day of treatment

Each day please report to the lower ground floor reception on arrival. A radiation therapist from your treatment room will come and collect you from the waiting area.

Radiation therapists are responsible for your daily treatment. Each treatment machine has a team of radiation therapists, both male and female, who will deliver your treatment on a daily basis. This means you may not have the same staff treating you every day.

Treatment appointments usually take 10 to 30 minutes to complete. Most of this time is spent making sure you are positioned correctly. The radiation therapists will position you on the treatment bed as you were for the planning appointment.

When you are positioned correctly the staff must leave the room while the treatment machine, called a linear accelerator, is turned on. It is important to remain still, relaxed and breathe normally throughout the treatment session. The radiation therapists will observe you using a closed circuit television and microphone system while you are in the treatment room.

If you have any problems the staff can stop the machine and come into the room.
The radiation therapist will also use the treatment machine prior to treatment to take x-ray pictures to ensure that your treatment is delivered to the highest accuracy possible. When required small adjustments to your positioning will be made, this can be done by the radiation therapist from outside and inside the room.

For treatment the machine is only turned on for 30 to 60 seconds at a time. Treatment is painless and you won’t see or feel anything when the machine is turned on, you will just hear a buzzing noise.

The first day of treatment takes longer than subsequent appointments as all the measurements must be checked. The treatment is the same each day and is given according to your treatment plan.
After your treatment you will see an oncology nurse. The nurse will discuss skin care and any specific side effects related to your treatment. Any special medications will be given to you at this time if they are required.

You will be given a short form to fill out called, “Supportive Care Screening Tool”. This form is given to all patients on the first day of treatment to assess if there are any other ways we can be of assistance during your treatment.

A nurse will see you every week during your treatment to check on your progress, but nurses are also available at any time should you have any additional concerns.

**Step 4: Daily treatments**

Treatments at Alfred Radiation Oncology generally occur Monday to Friday for the duration of your treatment course. When treatment is completed you are required to return to the front desk and sign a Medicare form.

Your doctor or a registrar will see you once a week to review your progress. Please take this opportunity to discuss any medical problems, concerns or side affects you may be experiencing. If you need to see your doctor between weekly reviews, please ask.
Step 5: Follow-up appointment

After your treatment has finished, you will have a follow-up appointment with your radiation oncologist. In some circumstances, e.g. if you are from out of town or are seeing another specialist for ongoing active treatment of your disease, follow-up may be transferred to another specialist.

This appointment is usually a few weeks or months after your treatment is finished. This allows the treatment to take effect and any side effects to settle down.

7. Patient identification

Correct patient identification is essential for the health and safety of our patients. You will be asked three questions each time you attend planning and treatment:

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your date of birth?
3. What is your address?

On your first day of planning and first day of treatment you will also be asked what procedure you are here for, if you have any implanted devices, such as a pacemaker and if you are pregnant (for women of child bearing capacity).

During your planning appointment the staff will also ask for your consent to take a photograph of your face, which will be attached to your treatment record. This is another method used for correct identification.
8. Side effects

*Your Radiation Oncologist will discuss side effects specific to your treatment and the area of the body being treated.*

Common side effects
- Fatigue – Particularly towards the end of treatment.
- Skin reaction – The skin may become pink or red and feel itchy or irritated, similar to mild sunburn.

Skin care during treatment
Care of your skin in the area being treated is important.

The following tips should be followed throughout your treatment:
- Use luke warm water and a mild soap when washing the treatment area and rinse well.
- Pat dry the area after washing, rather than rubbing.
- Avoid wet shaving, waxing or hair removal creams in the treatment area. An electric shaver may be used.
- Avoid using products on the treatment area, unless discussed with your radiation oncologist or nurse.
- Avoid forms of direct heat or cold on the treatment area (i.e. hair dryer, electric blanket, heat/ice packs).
- It is important to shield the treatment area from being exposed to the sun during and after your treatment.
- Loose clothing is recommended, preferably cotton, allowing air to circulate freely.

*Continue following these tips for 2-3 weeks after your treatment has finished, as your side effects may continue during this period.*
9. Radiation therapy appointments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Treatment Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday – Friday</td>
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At times we may schedule appointments outside these hours. Do not arrive more than 15 minutes early for appointments scheduled prior to 8.00am, as the doors may be locked for security reasons.

Treatment is not usually scheduled over weekends and public holidays. During periods such as Christmas or Easter where break may affect your treatment, you may be asked to attend.

You will be asked to nominate a range of available times to attend for treatment and we will try to give you appointments as close as possible to your preferred times.

Certain times may be required for patients who cannot attend at other times. Such as hospital transport or ambulance patients.

You may be asked to change your scheduled time to accommodate these patients. Please be assured that your special needs will always be considered. Being flexible allows us to provide the best quality of service to everybody, including you.

We always try to minimize waiting times for treatment and consultations, explain any unforeseen delays and ensure you have sufficient time to ask questions and discuss any needs you may have.

If you have any questions about your appointments, please ask the radiation therapists on your treatment machine or the appointment bookings coordinator on (03) 9076 8013.
10. Travelling to Alfred Radiation Oncology

Alfred Radiation Oncology is located in the South Block of The Alfred, on the corner of Punt Rd and Commercial Rd, Prahran. Vehicle access to Alfred Radiation Oncology via Alfred Lane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Transport to The Alfred</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trains</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prahran station on the Sandringham line is a 10 minute walk along Greville Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yarra station on the Sandringham, Pakenham, Cranbourne and Frankston lines is a 20 minute walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trams</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tram 72 – Stop 26-Alfred Hospital/Commercial Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trams 3, 5, 6, 16, 64, 67 – Stop 25-Commercial Road/St Kilda Rd, then a 10 minute walk along Commercial Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus routes 216, 219 and 220 will take passengers to and from the CBD to The Alfred.</td>
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</table>
Car parking at The Alfred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitor Car Parking</strong></td>
<td>Entrance via Gate 3 from Commercial Road into Centre Lane. Open daily 6am to 10.30pm. Max height 2.1 metres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disabled Car Parking</strong></td>
<td>Disabled car parking is available at the front of Alfred Health Radiation Oncology and in the multilevel car park with a valid permit, parking charges do apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street Car Parking</strong></td>
<td>Some street parking is available in the surrounding streets and is metered Monday through to Saturday afternoon. Check signs for details.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There may be waits of approximately 15 minutes in the queue to enter the car park during peak times, between 11am and 3pm. We suggest arriving early for your visit to The Alfred.

Alfred Radiation Oncology has no control over the car parking charges anywhere on The Alfred campus. However, patients are eligible for various concession rates.

To get the standard concession rate you must go to the ground floor reception and have your ticket validated. Otherwise, the full hourly rate will apply. Please do not use the prepay with credit card option when entering the car park, if you do we are unable to validate your ticket and give you the discounted rate.

If you have enquires about further concession rates that could apply for you, ask our staff or for more information on car parking rates, terms and conditions please refer to our website [www.alfredhealth.org.au](http://www.alfredhealth.org.au)
11. Allied health professionals

The services listed below are available for patients undergoing radiotherapy at Alfred Radiation Oncology. Please speak to your radiation oncologist or nurse for a referral to these services.

**Cancer Nurse Co-ordinators**

Cancer nurse co-ordinators provide support and information to patients and their families who are facing the challenge of a cancer diagnosis.

They can provide you with information regarding:

- cancer types
- surgery
- radiation therapy
- chemotherapy
- regular information sessions
- talking to family & friends
- communicating with your doctor
- support groups

The office of the cancer nurse co-ordinators is on the first floor of the South Block building.

Cancer nurse co-ordinators have access to a variety of resources such as books, DVDs and CDs.

In the Mt. Aspiring Resource area there is a computer with internet access for patient use. The Cancer nurse co-ordinators are happy to assist you in finding relevant and reliable websites for information about cancer and its treatment.
Social Work

Social workers are members of Allied Health and form part of the hospital treatment team which provides care to patients, their families and carers. Social workers assist in managing the impact of illness, hospitalisation and treatment.

A range of services are provided such as:

- assessment
- counselling
- crisis intervention
- discharge planning
- case management and care coordination referrals
- family and carer support
- resourcing
- education and research.

Dietitian

The dietitians at Alfred Radiation Oncology are involved in assisting with the nutrition related side effects of cancer and its treatment. The more common nutrition related side effects include loss of appetite and weight as well as altered bowel motions.

An appointment can be made with the dietitian if any of the following symptoms are experienced; weight loss (greater than 1kg), loss of appetite, altered taste, difficulty or pain on swallowing, altered bowel motions (constipation or diarrhoea) and nausea.

Not all people who undergo radiation therapy experience nutrition related side effects. The type and severity of symptoms is dependent on a number of factors including the dose of treatment and the area being treated.
Speech Pathology
The speech pathology team provides assessment, therapy techniques and support for patients with speech, swallowing and voice problems that may occur as a result of radiation treatment to the brain, head and neck region.

Psychiatry & Psychology
Patients undergoing radiation therapy may experience a range of emotional responses, most of which are indirectly related to treatment.

Common responses include anxiety and depression. Changes in cognition may also occur and can include memory problems, concentration and attention difficulties. Feelings of exhaustion and fatigue often lead to decreased motivation and physical activity which may impact on emotional wellbeing.

Psychological adjustment to radiation therapy is related to a number of factors, including treatment site pain, alterations in sleep, impact on usual functioning and resilience.

Psychological and psychiatric support can include:

- Activity scheduling and memory aids.
- Relaxation and meditation.
- Sleep strategies.
- Pain management.
- Medication.
12. In vivo dose measurement

In vivo dose measurement, which means radiation dose measurement on a person, is a quality and safety program where we evaluate the radiation dose you receive from your treatment. This practice is widely used in Europe; however we were the first centre in Victoria to embark on such a program.

In the first few days of your treatment, an Allied Health Assistant may place one or more small devices, called a dosimeter, on your skin. The dosimeters are smaller than a five cent piece and have a cord attached.

Accurate placement of the dosimeters is very important when we are comparing the measured dose with your predicted dose, so your treatment session may take a little longer on this day.

Some treatments do not require an in vivo measurement as analysis is completed utilising other methods.

13. Feedback about your care

We welcome and encourage patients and their families to give us feedback about their experiences. Your feedback is important to us and helps us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

You can provide feedback by:

- Talk to the staff caring for you.
- Complete a paper feedback form in the department or online at www.alfredhealth.org.au/feedback.
- Contact our Patient Liaison Team on (03) 9076 8001.
14. Healthcare rights in Victoria

As our patient you are entitled to receive the best possible care, and care that is appropriate to your health needs.

According to The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights in Victoria your rights are:

- Access – a right to access health care.
- Safety – a right to receive safe and high quality care.
- Respect – a right to be shown respect, and to be treated with dignity and consideration.
- Communication – a right to be informed about services, treatment options and costs in a clear and open way.
- Participation – a right to be included in decisions and to make choices about your health care.
- Privacy – a right to privacy and confidentiality of your personal information.
- Comment – a right to comment on your health care, and to have your concerns addressed.

Please feel free to ask staff for a copy of the charter. The charter can also be accessed at www.health.vic.gov.au/patientcharter.

15. Clinical trials

A number of clinical trials are conducted at Alfred Radiation Oncology, ranging from departmental projects to international studies for a variety of different cancers. These studies are important in improving treatments and outcomes for patients.

If you meet the selection criteria to participate in a trial, you may be asked to discuss this option in more detail with your radiation oncologist and a member of our research team.
16. Patient information and services

Mt. Aspiring Resource Area

The Mt. Aspiring Resource Area is located on the ground floor of Alfred Health Radiation Oncology. This resource area provides access to:

- Cancer Council booklets.
- Patient Library.
- A collection of books, pamphlets and DVDs.
- A computer with internet access for patient use.

The Quiet Room

On the lower ground floor of Alfred Radiation Oncology there is a room available for you and your family members or friends if you need some time to yourself whilst you are in the department. Please speak to the staff if you wish to use this room.

Cancer Council Victoria www.cancervic.org.au

The Cancer Council Victoria is a non-profit cancer charity organisation involved in cancer research, patient support, cancer prevention and advocacy. The Cancer Council Helpline (13 11 20) is a confidential service where you can talk about your concerns and needs with experienced cancer and palliative care nurses, for the cost of a local call.

A Multilingual Cancer Information Line, for those that speak languages other than English, is also available, so you can access information in the language of your choice.
17. Frequently asked questions

Will I be radioactive?
No. Radiation therapy uses x-rays which pass through the body and does not make you radioactive. It is completely safe to be in contact with others immediately after your treatment, including pregnant women and babies.

Will I lose my hair?
Hair will only be lost if it is in the treatment area and it depends on the amount of radiation that is being given. Please speak to your radiation oncologist or nurse for information.

Will I have to change my diet?
In most cases we want you to continue eating a healthy, well balanced diet while you are having radiation therapy treatment.

However, depending on the area of the body we are treating or the type of treatment, we may ask you to change your diet. In this situation specific instructions will be given.

Will radiotherapy make me sick?
Radiation therapy can cause mild nausea, but this is not common unless you are being treated in your abdomen region. If you are feeling unwell, please speak to your radiation oncologist or oncology nurse and they will be able to assist you.

Will I have to stay in hospital during my treatment?
Most radiation therapy is given as an outpatient service, so you will not be required to stay in hospital.
Can I work during treatment?
Many people continue to work during treatment. This is your choice, however if you are not feeling up to it you may wish to consider taking some time off.

Can I drive during treatment?
Yes, most people will continue to drive during their treatment. If you are not feeling up to it or are very tired you may wish to have a break from driving or drive less.

In some cases, such as neurological conditions, seizures or brain surgery, the Australian Transport Council states you are not legally allowed to drive for a period of six months. If you are not sure if you are fit to drive please discuss this with your radiation oncologist.

Can I exercise during treatment?
Yes, if you are feeling up to it. You may find you are more tired than usual due to the treatment so you may need to reduce the amount of exercise you are doing.

Can I go swimming during treatment?
Most patients are able to swim during treatment but please confirm this with your radiation oncologist. For example, depending on your treatment, chlorine may irritate the skin. After swimming it is important that you shower immediately to clean your skin.

If your skin starts to breakdown it is advised that you stop swimming due to the risk of infection.
Why do I have to come for treatment every day and why is the treatment spread out over such a long period of time?

The aim of radiation therapy is to maximise the damage to cancerous cells, while trying to spare the surrounding healthy tissue.

We do this is by giving the total amount of radiation, split up over many days or “fractions”. The treatment is split into fractions to:

- Damage the DNA (genetic code) of cancer cells, making them unable to grow or divide.
- Allow normal cells time to repair
- Attack cancer cells in different stages of their cell cycle to maximise cell damage.

It is important to come for treatment every day to ensure this cycle of cell damage is maintained. We also know that it is beneficial to finish a course of radiation therapy within an appropriate time frame, so missing days should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

Can you see my cancer on the x-ray pictures you take during my daily treatment?

The x-ray pictures we take are used to check your set-up and positioning only. We cannot see your cancer or check your treatment progress. This can only be done once the treatment is completed and you have follow-up scans, blood tests, etc.

Will radiotherapy affect my sex life?

A cancer diagnosis and the treatment you are receiving can have an effect on your sex life in many ways. Side effects of your diagnosis and treatment, as well as emotional, hormonal and physical changes, self-esteem and many other factors can all have a significant impact on you and your sexuality. For advice please speak to your radiation oncologist or nurse.
Do I need to pay for my radiation therapy treatment?

Outpatients

If you are having radiation therapy and you are a Medicare card holder, all your consultations at Alfred Radiation Oncology and your treatments will be bulk billed and covered by Medicare. You will be asked to sign a Medicare form, every day at the reception desk, on your way out.

If you see one of our doctors at an outside clinic, for example, at Frankston, you will be sent an invoice, to cover our costs for using those rooms. Most of this fee can be claimed back from Medicare.

Inpatients

If you are having radiation therapy and you are a Medicare card holder, all your treatments are covered by Medicare.

You will not need to sign a Medicare form for your radiotherapy, while you are staying at the hospital.

Non-Medicare card holders and overseas patients

At the end of each consultation you will receive an invoice. If you decide to proceed to treatment, staff will discuss with you a payment plan. Usually this plan requires payment in advance and reconciliation of the account when treatment is completed.

We may need to contact your health insurance company regarding guarantee of payment in which case payment in advance may not be required.

Please note that whilst some of the cost may be claimed from your private health insurer, Alfred Radiation Oncology does not submit claims on your behalf.
Further information:

Alfred Health Radiation Oncology
alfredhealth.org.au/services/radiation-oncology

The Alfred
alfredhealth.org.au

Latrobe Regional Hospital
lrh.com.au

Melbourne Prostate
melbourneprostate.org

Cancer Council Victoria
cancervic.org.au

If you would like to provide feedback or request a copy of this information in a different format, contact us at patient.information@alfred.org.au