

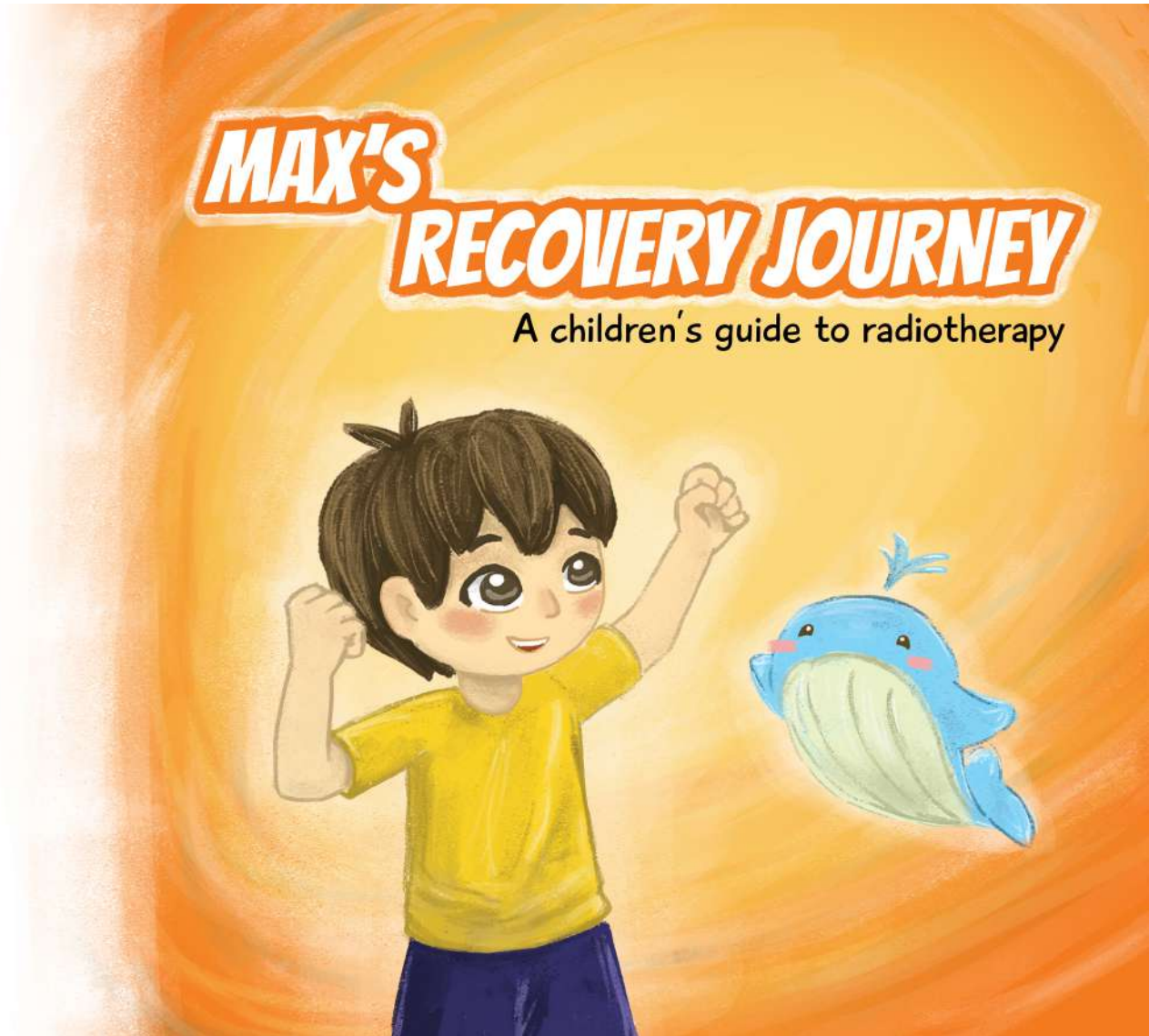
RADIOTHERAPY?

What's that? It sounds scary!

Will it be painful?

What will the doctor do to me?

This book tells the story of Max, who was told he needed to have radiotherapy treatment. He shares his experience as well as what helped him feel less worried and scared about receiving the treatment.

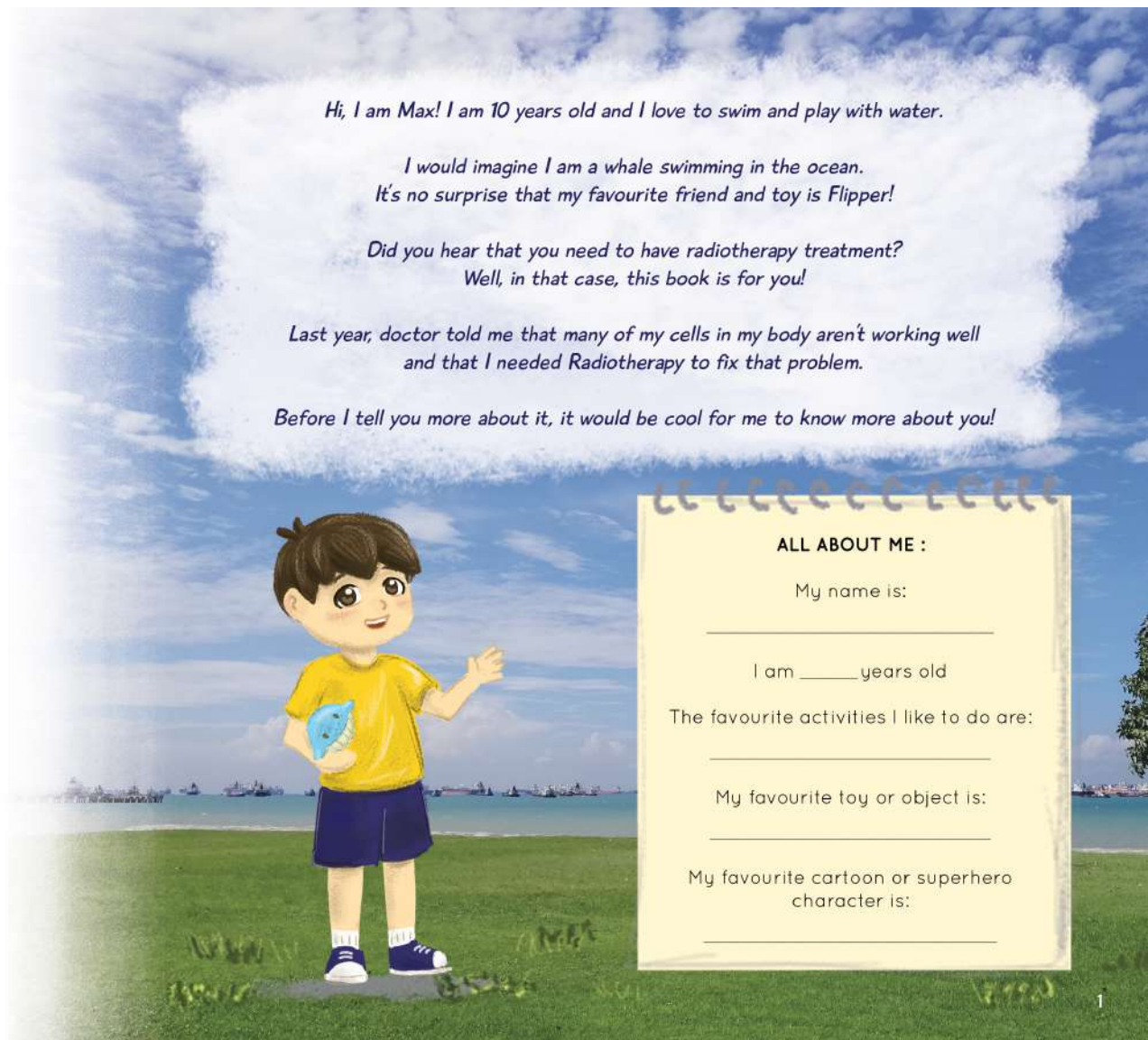


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Hi, I am Max! I am 10 years old and I love to swim and play with water.

*I would imagine I am a whale swimming in the ocean.
It's no surprise that my favourite friend and toy is Flipper!*

*Did you hear that you need to have radiotherapy treatment?
Well, in that case, this book is for you!*

*Last year, doctor told me that many of my cells in my body aren't working well
and that I needed Radiotherapy to fix that problem.*

Before I tell you more about it, it would be cool for me to know more about you!

ALL ABOUT ME :

My name is:

I am _____ years old

The favourite activities I like to do are:

My favourite toy or object is:

My favourite cartoon or superhero character is:

RADIOTHERAPY?

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I had so many questions when I first heard the word

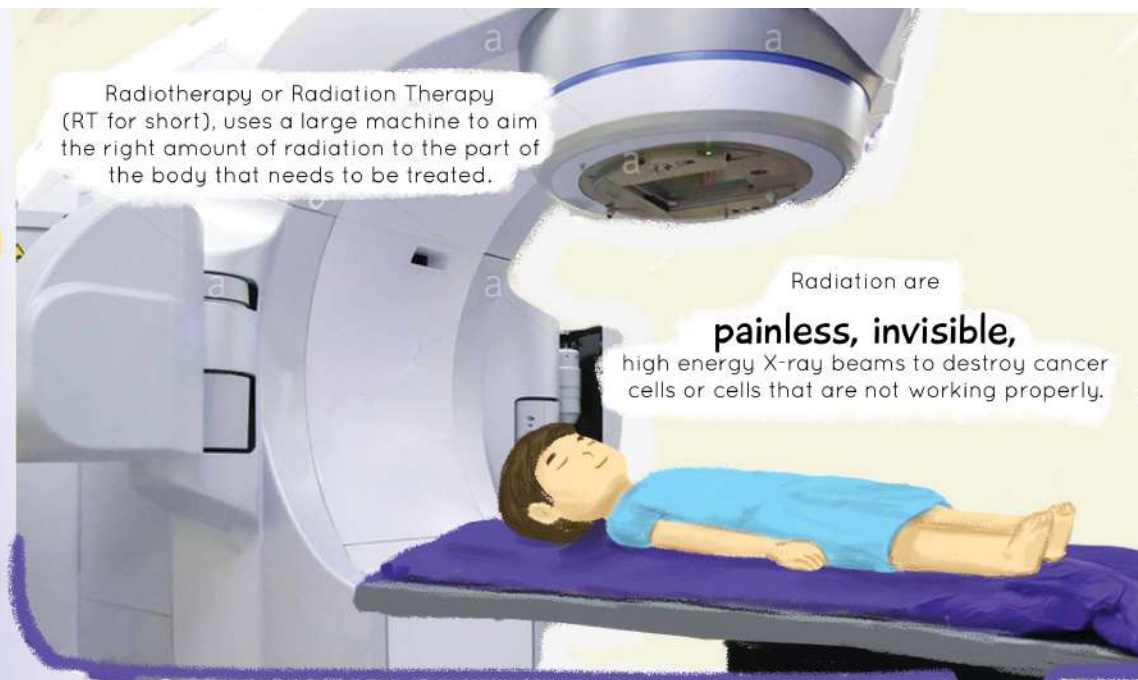
Radiotherapy

and all I wanted to do is to hide under my blanket with Flipper.



Radiotherapy or Radiation Therapy (RT for short), uses a large machine to aim the right amount of radiation to the part of the body that needs to be treated.

Radiation are **painless, invisible,** high energy X-ray beams to destroy cancer cells or cells that are not working properly.



But there are things to do before the start of Radiation Therapy. Let me tell you what they are.

Phew! At least now I know it is not going to be painful.





For RT to work, the doctor needs to know the exact position, shape and size of the tumor; which area of the body needs to be treated and which areas to avoid.

To do that, I had to have CT-simulation! It involves taking a picture (or CT-scan) of my body.

CT stands for **Computerised Tomography**.

Wow. That's a big word isn't it?

The doctor got the help of **radiation therapists** to get the CT-simulation done.

Radiation therapists are people who operate the radiation machines and give the correct amounts of radiation treatment that the doctor ordered.

They work closely with the doctors and specialists who plan the treatment.



"Your head and body needs to be in the 100% same position each time you have RT"

"What? That will be impossible unless I am a statue!"

To make sure I can be in the same position each time, the radiation therapists can use 3 different methods: face mask, body mold and tattoo.

But not all children need all 3 methods.

Let me explain more...



Method 1: Face Mask.

The face mask is made up of a special plastic material (called thermoplastic) that has many tiny holes. It gets soft when it is warm, and hard when it is cooled.

Amazing, isn't it!

On the day of the CT-simulation, the radiation therapist put a warm, soft plastic over my face. It felt like having a warm towel on my face.

They gently pressed around my **face, chin, and nose** so that it can take the shape of my face.

While all these were happening, I imagined I was swimming in the ocean on a warm day with Flipper, while listening to music that reminded me of waves and the ocean.



How would you like your mask to look like?



When the mask is cooled, it can only fit my handsome face. Isn't it cool?

Some children and teenagers say the masks looks like a spaceman helmet or a superhero mask. But I like to think it looks like a deep sea diver helmet!

Method 2: Body Mold

I laid down on a special cushion called a Vaclok. It's like lying on a bean bag. When the air of this cushion is sucked out using a vacuum machine, it got stiff and in a few minutes, it took the shape of my body.



Flat Vaclok Body Cushion

The cushion felt hard, but it was ok because I did not have to lie on it for too long.



Deflated Vaclok Body Cushion



Method 3: "Tattoos"

The radiation therapists helped to mark the area of my skin using teeny-weeny drops of ink. Before that, they helped to put lots of numbing cream on my skin so I don't feel anything when they apply the ink.

Some children have 1, 3, 5 or 7 "tattoos". Some children don't need to have tattoos.

The tattoos are so tiny that now, I can't even see where the tattoos they made for me on my skin are.





Dad and the radiotherapist could see me through the window in the next room.

Before I knew it, I completed my CT-simulation and I could go home.

Next, I had CT-scan done wearing my face mask.

It only took a few short minutes.

My job was to keep very, very still and not move.

The radiation therapists told me some younger children need more help to keep still.

The doctor would give a medicine called anaesthesia to help them go to deep sleep and when they wake up, the mask, body mold, or tattoos were done.

So whether you need a face mask, or Vaclok, or tattoos, or anaesthesia, the doctor will let you know.

Today is my first day of RT!

I was nervous but Flipper and dad helped me.

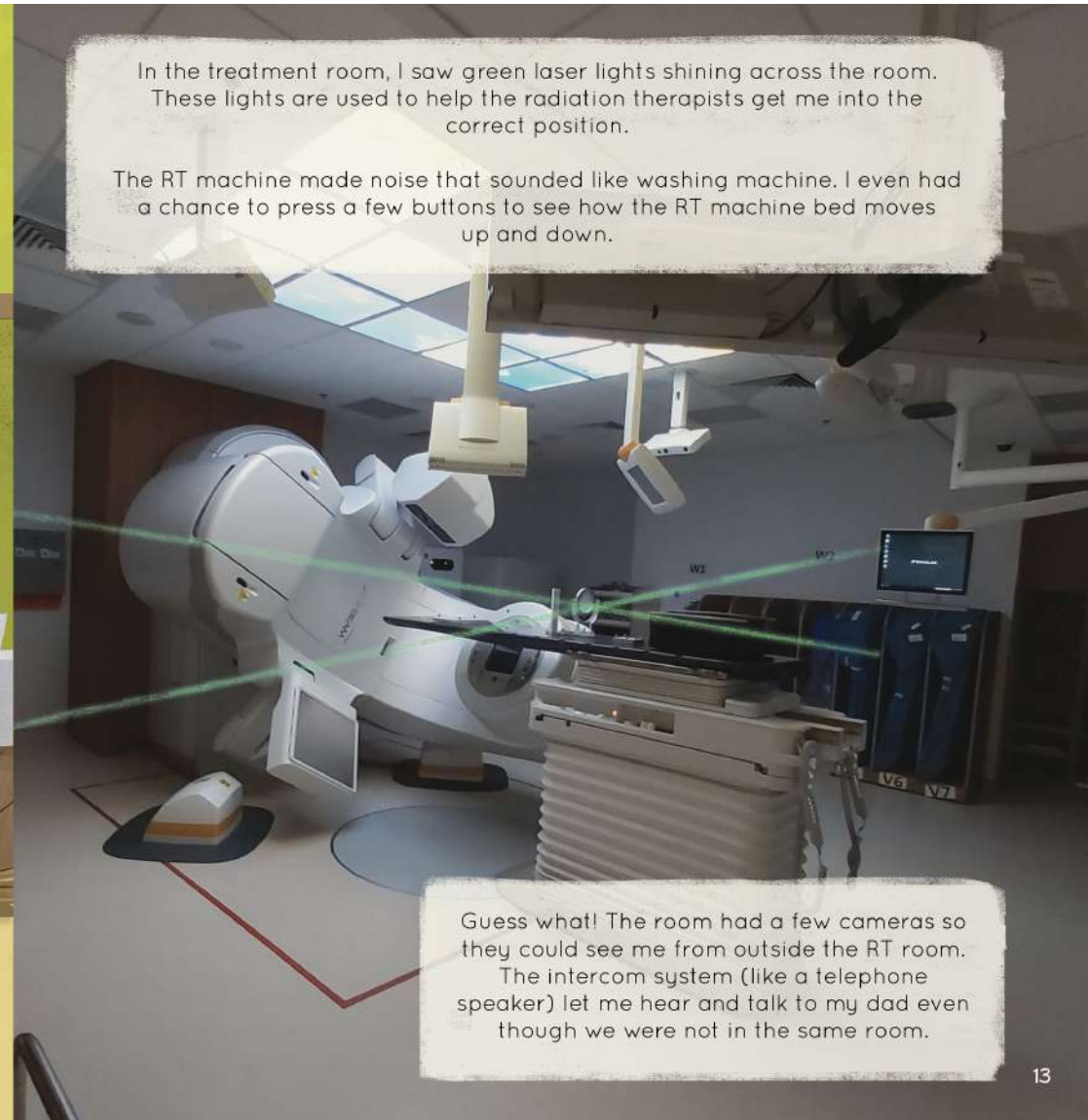
Watching the movie "Finding Nemo 2" on my dad's iPad helped me not to worry too much.

I had to wait at the reception area until they called my number and name.

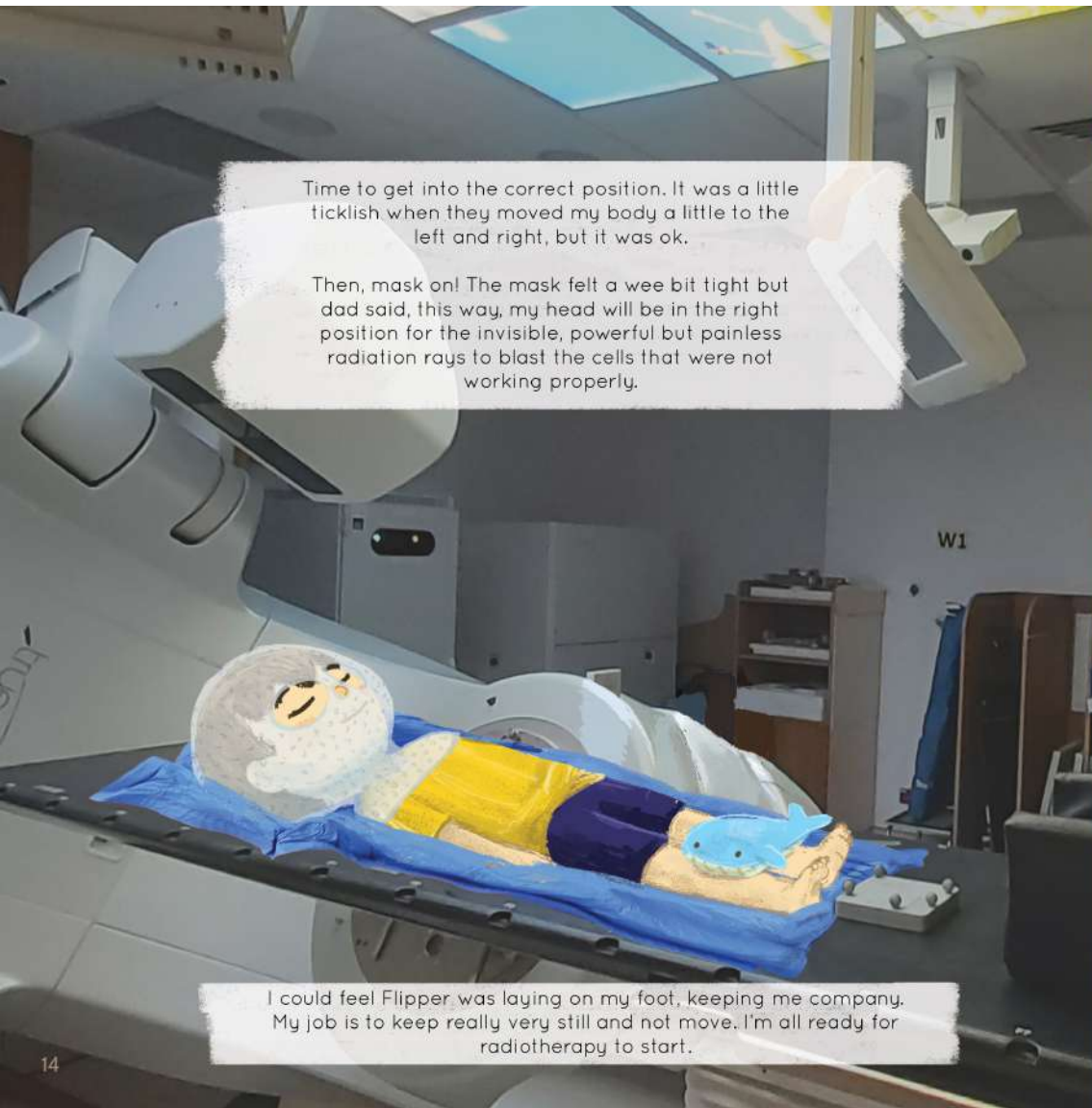


In the treatment room, I saw green laser lights shining across the room. These lights are used to help the radiation therapists get me into the correct position.

The RT machine made noise that sounded like washing machine. I even had a chance to press a few buttons to see how the RT machine bed moves up and down.



Guess what! The room had a few cameras so they could see me from outside the RT room. The intercom system (like a telephone speaker) let me hear and talk to my dad even though we were not in the same room.



Time to get into the correct position. It was a little ticklish when they moved my body a little to the left and right, but it was ok.

Then, mask on! The mask felt a wee bit tight but dad said, this way, my head will be in the right position for the invisible, powerful but painless radiation rays to blast the cells that were not working properly.

I could feel Flipper was laying on my foot, keeping me company. My job is to keep really very still and not move. I'm all ready for radiotherapy to start.



"Ok, we are starting the RT treatment now. Stay still."

Although I was alone in the room, I didn't feel too scared because Flipper was with me. My favourite music was playing. I also knew Dad could see and hear me from outside the room.

The machine moved past my face a few times. It didn't come close to me at all, and like what dad and everyone told me, it didn't hurt one bit.

"Finished! It's all done!"

The radiation therapists removed the mask and I got off the bed!

Yeah! I did it!

Day 1 of RT completed with great success!



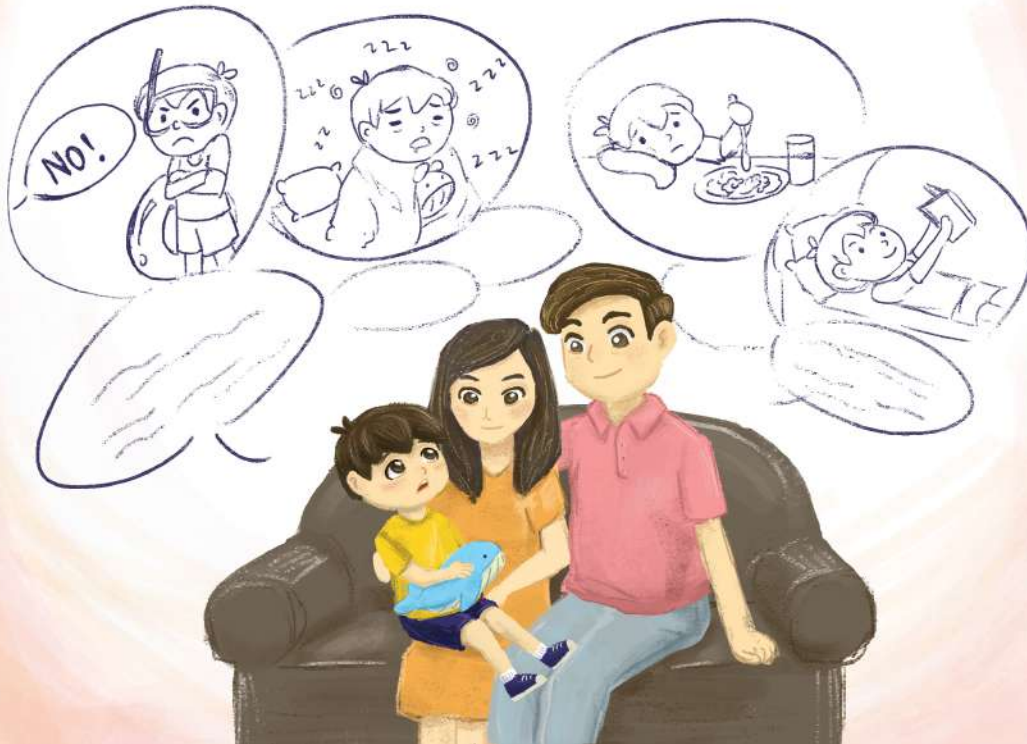
Guess what... most of the time spent in the RT room was getting into the correct position. The actual RT treatment took only a few minutes!

I had 6 weeks of RT. Some children had 2 or 3 weeks of treatment. Sometimes I felt tired and unwell when I got home.

Some days, I didn't feel like eating much. Other days I was full of energy and wanted to play games or read books all day long!

Some days I felt sad and angry that I cannot go swimming. Other days felt happy that I could do anything I wanted at home.

No matter what I felt, I always tell my dad and mom and Flipper.



Yeah! It is finally my last day of RT treatment!
I even had a mini celebration to mark the end of it!



Here is my list of what helped me during my RT. Maybe some of these ideas will help you too!

1. Know what is RT all about.
It's not as scary as I think it is after I find out more about it.
2. Pack what I want to bring for RT.
I bring Flipper, an iPad, a book, water bottle, and biscuits
3. Decide what I want to do during RT treatment
I listened to music during RT
4. Remind myself what is my job during RT -
I tell myself to keep really still when RT starts and it will be ok
5. When I got a bit worried -
I remember that dad is with me
6. When I feel unwell -
I tell my dad and mom
7. When I feel scared, worried, sad, angry -
I tell my dad and mom, talk to Flipper and do something that will make me happy!



Some things you can find out before start of RT treatment

Name of my RT doctor:

Names of my radiation therapists:

Name of my Child Life Therapist:

Which room will I be having my RT:

I will have _____ days of RT treatment

Will I need to have a face shell? Yes or No

Will I need to have Vaclok? Yes or No

Will I need to have tattoos done? Yes or No.

If yes, how many I need? _____

What I am most worried about RT treatment:

This is my checklist of what will help me:



You can come up with a list of things that will help you during RT treatment too!