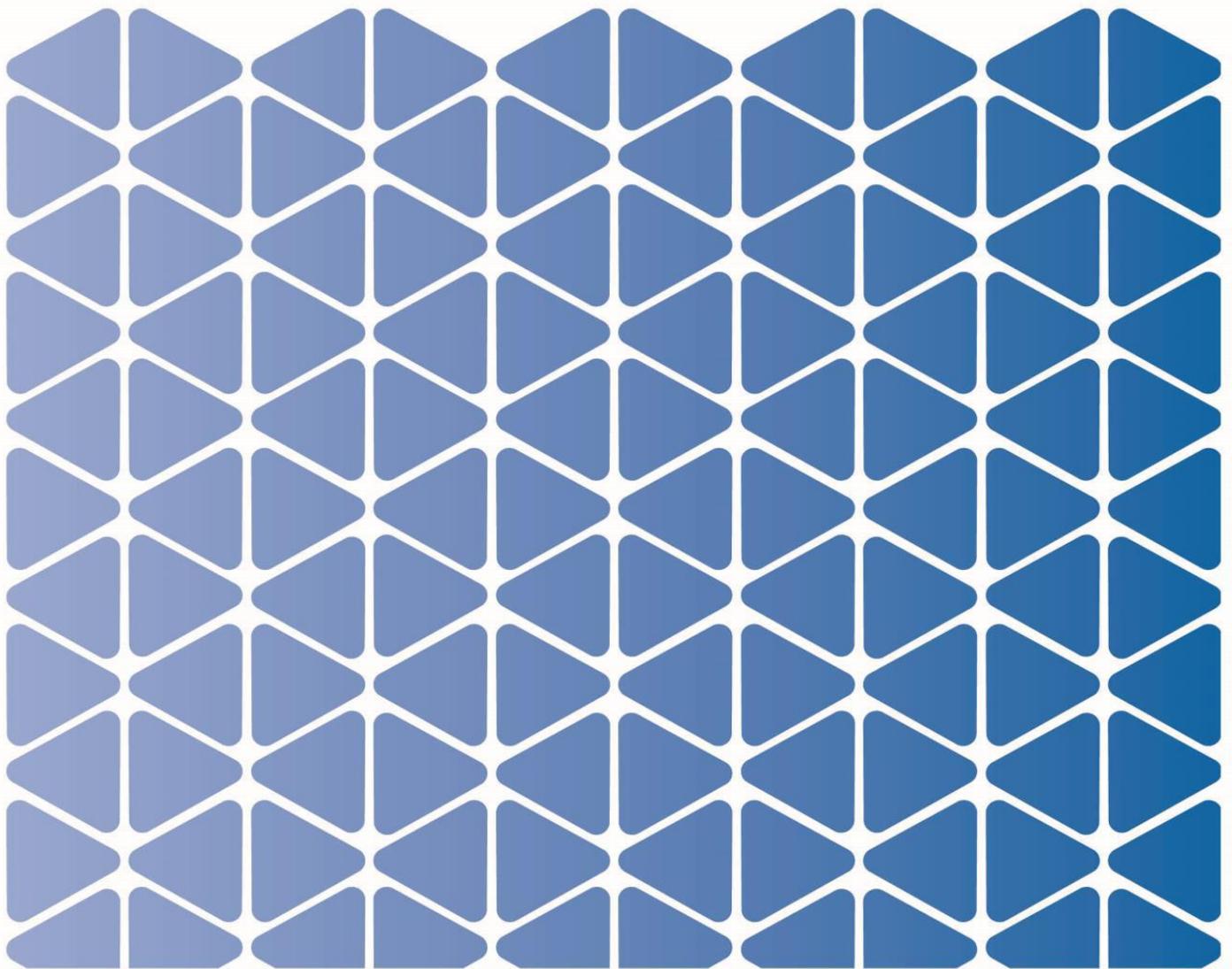




PATIENT INFORMATION

**RADIOTHERAPY TO THE  
PROSTATE: SIDE EFFECT  
INFORMATION**





## Worcestershire Oncology Centre

Improving cancer services in Worcestershire

### Introduction

This leaflet will explain possible side effects which may develop when receiving radiotherapy to your prostate area.

These effects are individual and will depend on the dose of radiotherapy you receive and the length of your treatment. Everyone reacts to radiotherapy differently and many people have minimal side effects. Most side effects are temporary and are rarely severe. Acute (early) side effects may start at varying times during treatment and disappear in the weeks after treatment finishes. Late side effects may not occur for a long time after the treatment has finished.

The radiographers will explain your possible side effects in more detail and answer any questions you may have before you start treatment.

### Acute (early) side effects

*These can occur whilst you are undergoing radiotherapy and in the weeks immediately afterwards. They tend to be cumulative so may not occur in the first week.*

### Bladder

You may experience increase in frequency and urgency of urination and this can seem worse at night. There may be a reduction in strength/quality of flow and some people can experience a burning or stinging sensation. If this becomes persistent let your radiographers know. It is not uncommon to pass some blood in the urine, however if this happens do mention it to your treatment radiographers or the review radiographers.

You can help yourself by

- Increasing fluid intake
- Avoiding drinks which may irritate the bladder such as alcohol, coffee, and tea. Caffeine free alternatives may be better. Try to drink plenty of water or squash.

## **Bowel**

Your bowel movements may become more frequent and softer and looser in consistency. It is not uncommon to experience a feeling of needing to open your bowels and then passing very little. You may also notice an increase in wind and passing some mucous or occasional blood from your back passage. This may be accompanied by pain and discomfort.

You can help yourself by

- Eating a well-balanced normal diet. If necessary we will advise you on changing your diet or medication which may help.

## **Tiredness**

It is not uncommon to feel tired as you go through radiotherapy treatment. It can be a combination of travelling to and from hospital and coping with the side effects of treatment. Research suggests that gentle exercise and keeping active can help with the symptoms of tiredness and fatigue. Macmillan Cancer Support and Cancer Prostate UK have a lot of information available. Please ask your radiographers for the appropriate booklets.

## **Hair loss**

You may find that you will lose your pubic hair in the treatment area. It will grow back but may be thinner. The radiation is unlikely to give you a skin reaction in the treatment area.

## **Other**

During treatment you are **not** radioactive. Once the machine is switched off there is no radiation present so you are safe to be around children and pregnant women.

## **Late side effects**

*These can develop months or years after you have completed your treatment. Modern machines and techniques have reduced some of these late effects; however they are the hardest to predict.*

**Bladder changes** – can include a need to pass urine more frequently and reduced bladder capacity and occasionally blood in the urine.

**Bowel changes** – bleeding from the bowel can occur in 5-10% of patients following Radiotherapy. This can happen from 6 months to 2 years after completion of Radiotherapy and usually settles without treatment. Some people feel the need to open their bowels more frequently than before Radiotherapy and occasionally with some urgency.

**Sexual function** - Radiotherapy can cause damage to the nerves that control getting an erection, and it can take up to 2-5 years for the damage to appear. It may occur in 40-50% of men and the risk increases further if you had potency difficulties prior to treatment or if you are receiving hormone therapy. Loss of libido is common too along with dry ejaculation or reduction in the amount of semen produced. Your consultant or one of the team will be able to advise you about treatments that may help with these side effects.

**Other** – there is a very small risk of second cancers developing in adjacent areas in the years following your radiotherapy treatment.

Please discuss any new symptoms that you experience after your treatment with your consultant in the follow up clinic.

If you are concerned about the late effects of Radiotherapy treatment, or would like more information, please speak to your consultant or the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist Radiographers on 01905 761420.

### **Hormones**

Your Consultant or a member of the team may also have prescribed some hormone treatment for you to lower the levels of testosterone. A course of treatment is typically over 6 months or 2-3 years and usually 3 months of hormone treatment is prescribed before radiotherapy treatment starts. These may also give you side effects including, hot flushes, weight gain around the waist, mood changes, loss of libido and breast tenderness/enlargement. If you would like more information on management of these side effects please speak to your oncologist or the Macmillan specialist review radiographers.

### **Support**

As you go through your treatment you will be seen regularly by specialist review radiographers who will offer advice and management for side effects as required.

Any side effects you may have experienced will continue after radiotherapy has finished for at least 2 weeks.

If you are concerned about the late effects of radiotherapy treatment, or would like more information, please speak to your consultant, the Acute Oncology Service 01905 760158 or the Macmillan specialist radiographers on 01905 761420.

You may also contact your GP or your Clinical Nurse Specialist.

**Treatment preparation** - When attending for your CT planning scan & radiotherapy treatment you may be given some information to prepare your bladder and bowels for treatment.

**Bladder preparation:** 1 hour before your CT scan you will be required to empty your bladder and then drink 500mls of water (1 bottle **or** 3 full cups) over 10 minutes. You will then be required to hold this until after your CT scan or radiotherapy treatment, if you have difficulty holding your water then please speak to our receptionist or a radiographer.

**Bowel/Rectum preparation:** You should aim to have an empty bowel/rectum (back passage) for your CT planning scan & radiotherapy treatment. You will be required to empty your rectum before you start your bladder preparation (outlined above); you might be given a micro-enema to help you empty your bowel/rectum.

**Micro-Enemas** - A micro-enema is a small capsule with a nozzle that is inserted into the rectum (back passage) and this is used to help empty your rectum in preparation for your CT scan and treatment.

When you attend for your CT scan and radiotherapy treatment your doctor or radiographer may prescribe micro-enemas, you will be given instructions on how to use them.

**Hydration** - It is very important to be hydrated when attending for your CT scan appointment and your radiotherapy treatment. Please make every effort to increase your hydration in the days/weeks before your CT scan and your radiotherapy. Try and drink double the amount of water/squash you normally do to avoid dehydration and to maintain good hydration throughout the course of your treatment.

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.