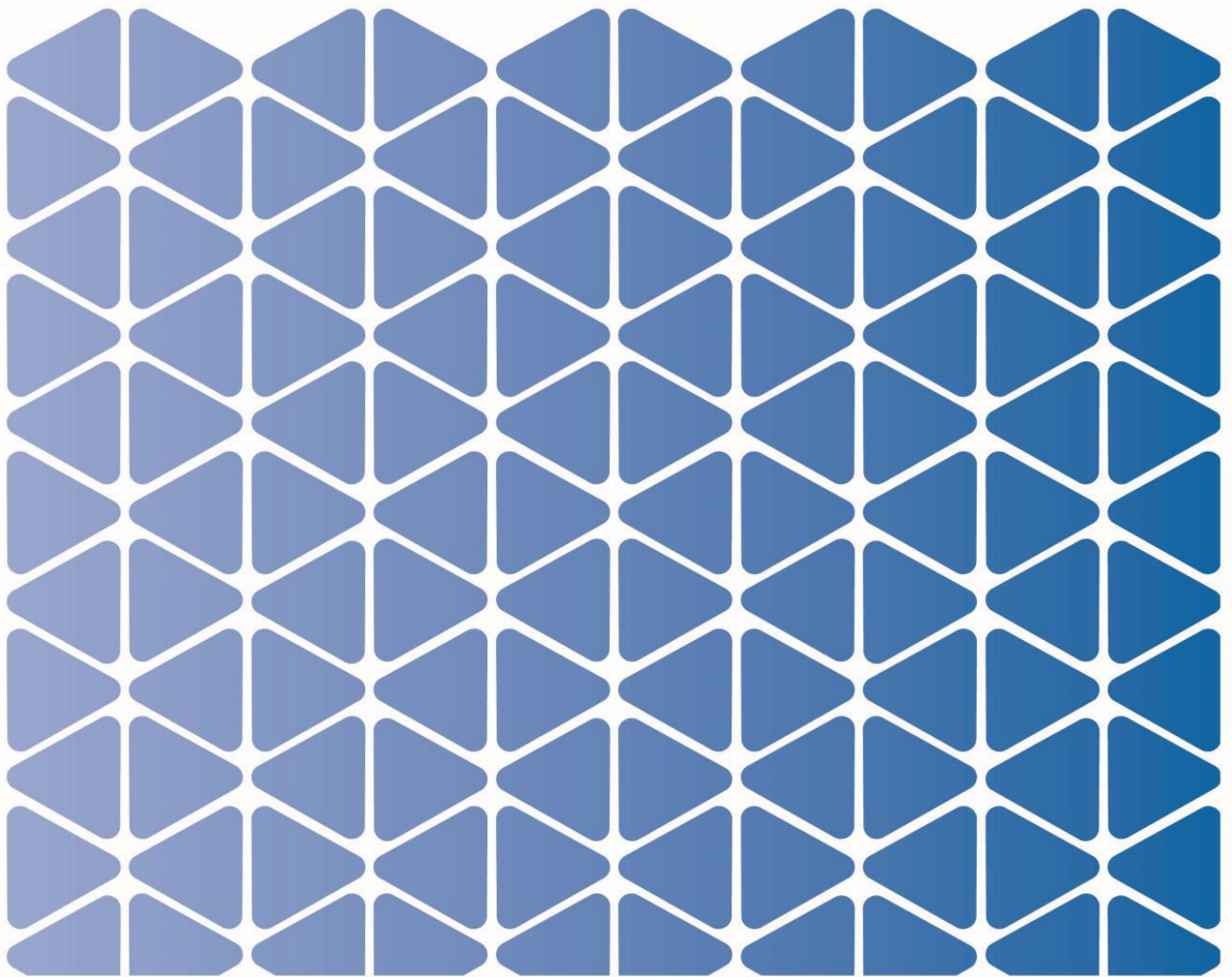




PATIENT INFORMATION

RADIOTHERAPY FOR LYMPHOMA





Worcestershire Oncology Centre

Improving cancer services in Worcestershire

Introduction

This leaflet explains the possible side effects of your treatment for people who have a lymphoma.

Radiotherapy is used to give radiation treatment to one or two precise areas of the body. This differs from chemotherapy which travels through the body in the bloodstream. Lymphoma cells are very sensitive to radiation and this makes radiotherapy an effective treatment for lymphoma.

Patients who have low grade or slow growing lymphomas may find that radiotherapy is the only treatment required.

It is also used as a consolidation treatment after chemotherapy treatment to make sure the lymphoma is completely destroyed. Doctors can target the treatment to enlarged lymph nodes or where they think the lymphoma may remain in the body.

Sometimes radiotherapy may also be used to control symptoms such as pain or breathlessness. It can help by reducing the size of the lymphoma.

Your radiotherapy will be tailor made for you and depending on the area of the body being treated the preparation and treatment planning will differ. This leaflet will try to give you a general over view of side effects but they will be different depending on area of the body being treated.

If you are having treatment to the face or head area you will need to have a special mask made. You will be given a separate leaflet about how the mask will be made. Marks will be put on this mask instead of your skin to enable the treatment to be given accurately.

Every patient's treatment is individual and specifically planned. Your radiotherapy doctor will discuss with you the total number of treatments that you need and how often you will need to attend the department. Treatment may take anything from 10-20 minutes depending on your individual treatment plan.

Side effects of radiotherapy

Effects on the Skin

- Radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction similar to exposure to the sun in the area treated
- Towards the end of treatment the skin may become red and/or dry and itchy and the reaction may continue to develop after the treatment has finished.
You can help yourself by:
- Washing daily using a mild, non-perfumed soap and making sure the water is not too hot. If you are going to shave in the treatment area please use an electric razor as this will lessen the possibility of skin irritation.
- Do not use sunbeds on the treated area and avoid any extremes of temperature.
- Try to wear loose clothes in the treatment area as this can reduce any irritation and friction
- You may find it helpful to use a moisturising cream in the treatment area. There are no specific recommendations for one product over another due to lack of evidence so it is fine to use a cream you are familiar with.
- Apply the cream thinly and often but not right before radiotherapy treatment.
- Stop using it if skin becomes irritated, peels or blisters and talk to your radiographers for further advice.

Effects on your mouth and throat

If your mouth is included in the treatment area you may experience some of these side effects-:

- The saliva in your mouth may become thicker and the mouth may feel dry.
- Food may become tasteless.
- The inside of your mouth may become painful and sore and there is a small possibility that you may develop some ulcers in your mouth. These effects may develop after treatment has finished as the effects of radiotherapy continue to work.
- If your throat is in the treatment area there is a small possibility that swallowing may feel difficult or uncomfortable.
- You may experience an irritating cough, especially when you lie down. It may be helped by frequent sips of fluid (carry a bottle of water around with you).
- Avoid drinks that may further dry your mouth such as alcohol.
- Pain relief medication can be prescribed by your consultant or member of the team if needed.

Effects on other parts of your body

If your stomach is included in the treatment area you may experience-

- Feelings of nausea and vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Anti-sickness medication will be available if you require it.

If your pelvis is included in the treatment area you may experience-

- Urinary changes including frequency and urgency
- Slower flow
- Stinging or discomfort when passing urine
- Bowel changes including increased frequency of motion
- Looser stools
- You may experience some temporary hair loss in the treatment area.

If your face or eyes are included in the treatment area you may experience –

- A sore mouth and/or some swallowing difficulties,
- Irritation of the eye, difficulty tolerating light and sticky eyes.

Tiredness

Most patients having radiotherapy feel more tired, particularly towards the end of treatment. If you feel tired you may need extra rest. However, evidence suggests that gentle exercise such as a short walk can also help.

If you regularly exercise, it is acceptable to continue with your normal exercise routine unless the treatment team advise against this.

If you have any of the above side effects then please let your treatment radiographers know as there is support and advice available to help you manage them.

After treatment

The side effects from the treatment will continue for several weeks to months after the treatment course has been completed.

If you develop new symptoms after your treatment is over, or you are concerned that the immediate side effects are not clearing up, you can contact the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist Radiographer on 01905 761420 or The Acute Oncology service on 01905 760158.

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

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.