

PATIENT INFORMATION

**RADIOOTHERAPY TO THE
PROSTATE:
PATIENT 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. The leaflet also gives information and advice about preparing for your CT planning scan and daily radiotherapy treatment. Please take time to read this leaflet prior to CT planning scan and starting your radiotherapy treatment.

Side effects of treatment 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 of your treatment.

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 people.

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 people 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 affects 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.

CT Planning

You will have a CT scan to help with the planning of your treatment. This is not a diagnostic scan and will not provide sufficient information to assess the status of your cancer or any other abnormalities.

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.

Ideally, patients need to have a comfortably full bladder and empty rectum (back passage) for the CT planning scan and daily treatment. This will help to limit the amount of bladder and bowel in the treatment area and may help to reduce side effects. Please inform the radiographers if you have a catheter in place.

Most patients will be asked to use a micro-enema. These are small capsules 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. You will be given these at your CT planning appointment

Enemas are safe to use unless you are allergic to any of the following ingredients:

- Sodium citrate
- Sodium lauryl sulphate
- Sorbitol

Or

- You have an inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohns.

Please discuss with the radiographers if you think this may apply to you.

You will be asked to use the enema and then wait in the waiting room until you feel the need to empty your bowels. You should then return to the toilet and empty your bowels and pass water to empty your bladder.

In order to have a comfortably full bladder for the scan you should then drink 400mls water over the next 10 minutes and then wait 40-50 minutes. You will then be required to hold this until after your CT scan, **if you have difficulty holding your water then please speak to our receptionist or a radiographer.**

Daily treatment.

You should eat normally before your daily radiotherapy treatment.

It is important that your bladder is as comfortably full as it was when you had your CT planning scan and that your rectum is empty.

Follow the instructions below for each radiotherapy treatment. Preparation can be done at home or in the radiotherapy department. If you are travelling to the department by hospital transport, we suggest to wait until you arrive at the hospital to complete your preparation.

If you are kept waiting and unable to hold your bladder full please speak to one of our receptionists

- **Step 1**: Use enema (If prescribed) to help **empty your bowel/rectum** (back passage) 1hr 30mins before your treatment appointment.

- **Step 2**: **Completely empty your bladder** ONE hour before your treatment appointment.

- **Step 3**: Drink **400ml** of **water** over the next **10 minutes** to fill your bladder and then hold until **after** your treatment.

The treatment radiographers will use an ultrasound scan to check that your bladder is full enough for radiotherapy treatment. You will also have a mini CT scan each day prior to treatment, this allows the radiographers to check the position of your prostate for the treatment.

Your treatment may not proceed if:

- You have too much wind or gas in your bowels
- Your rectum is too full
- There is not enough fluid in your bladder.

If this happens, the radiographers will tell you what is needed to proceed with the treatment. You may need to drink more fluid or wait longer for your bladder to fill.

The radiotherapy team at the Worcestershire Oncology Centre have worked with Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Charity to fund the use of reusable water bottles for patients undergoing pelvic radiotherapy treatment and are following a drinking protocol. As well as supporting patients in drinking the right amount of fluid for their radiotherapy treatment, the use of the water bottles will also reduce the use of single use plastic in the department.

If you would like to make a contribution to the charity to fund water bottles for future radiotherapy patients please scan the QR code below.

(Scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera or QR code reader and follow the link to donate.)



Or text BOTTLE to 70085 to donate £2.

Texts cost £2 plus one standard rate message.

You can also donate in the collection tin situated at the Radiotherapy reception.

Thank you for your support



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ACUTE HOSPITALS
CHARITY**
Putting patients first

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.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

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