



Information for
patients and
carers

Radiotherapy to the Breast and Chest Wall

You should have also received the following leaflets:

- Radiotherapy- a general guide for patients and carers
- Planning your radiotherapy treatment
- Radiotherapy treatment
- Skin Care during radiotherapy treatment

What are the benefits of this treatment?

Radiotherapy is given to treat your cancer and minimise the chances of it returning in your breast or chest wall. Radiotherapy has damaging effects on any remaining cancer cells. It may also cause some damage to surrounding healthy tissues resulting in side effects.

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

The oncologist may have advised you about other possible treatments before referring you for radiotherapy. They will be happy to discuss any concerns you may still have.

What will happen if you do not have this treatment?

There is an increased risk of your cancer returning in the breast or chest wall. You can discuss this with your Oncologist.

Side effects- early reactions- sore, red skin (erythema)

Radiotherapy can make the skin in the treated area become itchy, red, and sore. In some cases the skin can break down. Please follow the advice of the radiographers (and our skin care leaflet) from your first day of treatment and continue until at least 3 weeks after your course of treatment has finished. If you are concerned about your skin reaction after your treatment finishes, you may contact your breast care nurse, visit your practice nurse or phone the radiotherapy department for advice.

Fatigue

Radiotherapy can damage normal tissues close to or in the treated area and your body has to heal these damaged cells. This leads to tiredness which is very common. If you feel fit enough, gentle exercise can help. Eating nourishing food and drinking plenty of water may also help to provide your body with the nutrients your cells need to repair themselves. Do not force yourself to do things you do not have the energy to do.

Swelling of the breast (oedema)

Any tissue that is irradiated can become swollen and the area may feel uncomfortable, particularly in the nipple area and along the scar. Unfortunately, only time will help this problem. It can take several months after treatment for this to settle completely. If you do find it uncomfortable, simple painkillers such as paracetamol may help.

Lymphoedema

Swelling of the arm may happen following surgery as well as during and after radiotherapy. If you are concerned about this, please speak to your consultant about a referral to a lymphoedema specialist.

Sore throat

This is a rare side effect but can happen, particularly if we are treating your lymph nodes as well as your breast and chest wall. If this occurs please drink plenty of fluids and we can arrange to give you a liquid paracetamol mixture.

Side effects-late reactions

Some people notice slight changes to the size, shape and skin colour in the treatment area. They may feel some tenderness in the scar area or the ribs (in the treated area). A skin change called telangiectasia can occur several years after radiotherapy. It appears as little red broken vessels on the skin surface in the treatment area. Lymphedema may occur, even after radiotherapy has finished.

Always make sure you let the radiographers know if you get any side effects. We need you to tell us exactly how you feel not only with regard to side effects, but also your general wellbeing.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Radiotherapy Reception/Transport queries (01772) 522900

Radiotherapy Appointment queries (01772) 522931

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.macmillan.org.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے بے ل مدد ی ضرورت ہے تو ییچھیا جس ییہ ابی دست بو یسکت ہے برا ے مہر یان یو ییچھہی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمكن تو فير هذه المعلومات

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Division: Surgery
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