



Information for
patients and
carers

Radiotherapy to Colon or Rectum

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 has damaging effects on cancer cells. It will also cause some damage to surrounding healthy tissues resulting in some side effects. The radiotherapy is given to try to kill the cancer cells and reduce the chance of the cancer recurring.

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

For some patients, surgery alone may be an option. Radiotherapy can be used before or after surgery. Chemotherapy can also be used in combination with these treatments. Your consultant should have discussed these options with you.

What will happen if you do not have this treatment?

If you choose not to have this treatment the cancer may continue to grow. Symptoms may develop and worsen. Some cancers may advance and become incurable.

Side effects- early reactions-

Fatigue

As radiotherapy can damage normal tissues close to or in the treated area, your body needs to repair these damaged cells. Tiredness is a consequence of this. If you feel fit enough, gentle exercise can help. Do not force yourself to do things you do not have the energy to do.

Sore, red skin (erythema)

Radiotherapy can make the skin in the treated area become itchy, red, and sore. You can minimise this by following the advice of the radiographers (and our skin care leaflet).

Bowel symptoms

Treatment may irritate your bowel and you might need to go to the toilet more often. Medication may be prescribed for you. You may develop tenesmus, which is an urge to open your bowels without passing anything. This can feel like constipation. You may notice an increase in the amount of wind you pass. If opening your bowels becomes painful or you notice some spotting of blood, let us know. These side effects are not uncommon so do not be alarmed. Please **do not** modify your diet or take any medication for your bowels without discussing it with a radiographer or consultant.

Bladder symptoms

You may experience changes in the flow of your urine, a need to pass urine more often, a need to pass urine urgently, a burning sensation on passing urine and/or a small amount of blood in your urine. Your consultant may be able to prescribe you something to help with these symptoms. Drink plenty of water based fluids such as cordial. Tea and coffee can make the symptoms worse. Please tell the radiographers about any of these symptoms so they can ensure you do not have an infection. **Always** report any difficulty in passing urine to staff.

Side effects- late reactions

Radiotherapy to the lower abdomen in ladies is likely to induce the menopause in women who are still having regular periods. Infertility may also result from a lack of semen or reduced sperm count in males. Radiotherapy may lead to more urgent and frequent bowel opening and passing of water. Bleeding from the back passage may occur which can require medication or surgery. A reaction called vaginal stenosis may occur as a result of scar tissue forming after radiotherapy. Vaginal dilators can be given to females having their pelvis treated to try to prevent this happening. Please speak to a radiographer for more information about this.

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 કૃપાકરીને 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:

دوسری زبانوں اور بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو
یچھپا جس یبھی ابی دست ہو یسکت ہے براے مہر یمان پوے چھہی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه لمعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب
أخرى يملكن تو فيير هذه المعلوما

Department: Radiotherapy

Division: Surgery

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