

Information for patients and carers

Radiotherapy for Palliative Treatment

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

Details of your treatment

This leaflet is designed for patients who are receiving palliative radiotherapy. Radiotherapy is often given to try and improve symptoms you may be experiencing from cancer, or it may be given to try and shrink or halt the growth of disease in a certain area. If you have recently been diagnosed or have had radiotherapy before, it is normal to experience a wide range of emotions.

Your partner, family or friends might also find this leaflet useful to understand what you are currently experiencing so that they can help to support you.

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is a specialised treatment which uses precise, carefully measured doses of radiation to treat cancer.

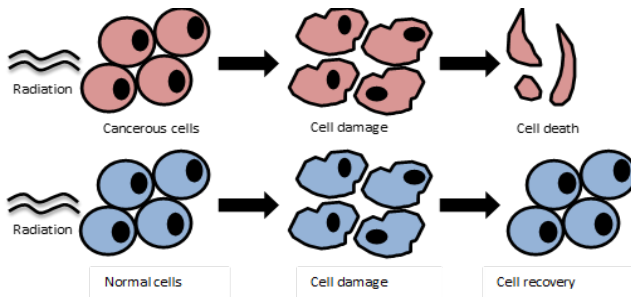
Treatment is given by highly trained radiographers, using specialised machines known as linear accelerators. The radiographers and planning staff work closely with your consultant to plan and deliver your treatment.

How does radiotherapy work?

Radiotherapy uses high energy X-rays to treat cancer. The X-ray beams are directed at the treatment area and cause damage to cells in the treatment area.

Normal healthy cells can recover from this damage, whereas abnormal cancer cells cannot.

Radiotherapy is therefore given to kill the cancer cells in the targeted area. This can help reduce symptoms and/or delay disease progression. The treatment itself is painless and there is nothing to feel.



Will I be radioactive?

If you are having external beam radiotherapy, you **will not be radioactive**. It is safe to be in close contact with people, including pregnant people, babies, and children.

When will my radiotherapy start?

After your consultant or specialist nurse has discussed your treatment options with you, you will receive an appointment to attend your radiotherapy planning scan. You will be given

your first radiotherapy treatment appointment when you attend for your planning scan.

The planning scan appointment is used to plan your radiotherapy treatment; this can take anywhere from a day up to a couple of weeks. Please do not be alarmed if you feel there is a long time between these appointments, this is due to the complex nature of the planning process.

If you require certain times and/or hospital transport, please let a member of staff know before you start treatment. The radiotherapy appointment team will do their best to accommodate your request, however this cannot always be guaranteed.

Before your treatment

For the planning scan, you will need to lie as flat as is comfortable for you and as still as possible. If you feel you may struggle to lie still for 10-15 minutes and take regular pain relief, please bring your pain relief with you and this could be taken 20 minutes prior to your appointment to make the process easier for you.

At the planning appointment you will have a CT scan. The treatment planning team use this scan to accurately plan your radiotherapy treatment, whilst ensuring that surrounding areas close to the treatment area do not receive more radiation than necessary.

During the scan

For the scan radiographers will position you as required for treatment, which includes lying on your back. Support will be given under your head and knees to aid comfort. Additional support can be given if you are uncomfortable or in pain. It is important you can manage this position for around 15 minutes. The radiographers may need to access parts of your body, but you will be covered as much as possible, and radiographers will always maintain your dignity.

After the scan, radiographers may give you between one to four small permanent marks, no bigger than a freckle, using a small needle and some ink. They are used to help the radiographers get you in the correct position for treatment every day and ensure accuracy of the treatment.

Radiotherapy Treatment

Before your first radiotherapy session, a radiographer will discuss the treatment process and answer any questions you may have, as well as giving you your full list of appointments.

For some areas of the body, your consultant may prescribe medication such as anti-sickness to take before the treatment to help with side effects. This will be discussed with you if required.

The radiographers will then make sure you are in the correct position for treatment. Once they are happy with their

checks, the radiographers will leave the room and begin treatment. There is nothing to see or feel during treatment. The treatment appointment should take approximately 15 minutes, but this may vary. If you are having more than one area treated, this appointment time could be longer.

It is very important that you do not miss any of your radiotherapy treatments, as it can make the treatment less effective. If you are feeling too ill to attend your treatment, please call the department and speak to a member of the team to see if we can assist.

Treatment reviews

Depending on your treatment regime, you may have scheduled review clinics with your consultant or the review team, within the department or over the phone.

These review clinics are for you to discuss any concerns or side effects that you may be experiencing from treatment.

The review clinics are scheduled on specific times and days and will be scheduled on your treatment appointment list.

Staff you will meet

We are a mixed gender department and treatment will be given by male and female staff members.

Royal Preston Hospital is a teaching hospital which means that we train and support undergraduate and postgraduate radiotherapy students and medical students. Students take

an active part in treatments and are closely monitored by qualified staff.

Side effects

You are likely to experience side effects due to your treatment. These tend to be short term which start, during or shortly after completing radiotherapy and usually resolve within two to six weeks. All potential side effects will be explained to you when completing your consent form.

If you are receiving radiotherapy to help improve pain, you may initially experience a temporary worsening of pain in the few days to a week following your radiotherapy. You should continue to take regular pain relief during this time and contact your specialist nurse or palliative care team if you need further support.

After your treatment

After you have completed your course of radiotherapy your consultant or review team will explain your follow-up procedure. It is important to be aware any side effects can continue to worsen after treatment but should have improved by your follow up appointment which is usually within a few weeks after treatment finishes.

Please remember that you are free to contact the department at any time after your treatment has finished

should you have any concerns or questions. You will be given a summary letter towards the end of your radiotherapy treatment containing contact information for the department.

Smoking

It has been proven that smoking can make your radiotherapy side effects worse and reduce the effectiveness of the treatment. It is important that you reduce or stop smoking whilst on treatment.

We understand that this may be difficult at such a stressful time and staff are very open to discussing this with you and offering you the support you may need.

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Radiotherapy Reception **(01772) 522923**

Appointments **(01772) 522931**

Transport **(01772) 522295**

If you would like to watch a short radiotherapy information video please scan the QR code below.



Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

Stop smoking services

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service/>

Macmillan at Rosemere Cancer Centre

<https://tinyurl.com/38z3d2fy>

(01772) 523709

<https://prostatecanceruk.org/>

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking

this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

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

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

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