Radiotherapy for Bone Pain

Information for patients
This leaflet aims to help you and your family understand more about your treatment. It will be given to you in addition to the information you will receive from your clinical oncologist (who is a specialist doctor in cancer treatment).

Their team will be caring for you during your treatment. This team may include radiographers, nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapist and dietitians.

This leaflet describes radiotherapy planning and treatment. It also explains the side-effects which you may experience during and after treatment. Each person’s treatment will vary, so the information given is a general guide. The healthcare team looking after you will explain your treatment and the side-effects in detail. If you hear any words or phrases that you do not understand, please ask your doctor or a member of your healthcare team what it means. It does not matter how many times you ask.

Staff will make every effort to meet your individual needs or will direct you to the person who can help.

*Please do not bring any valuables into hospital with you as the Trust cannot accept liability for loss or theft.*

**Bone Pain**

Radiotherapy can be used to relieve pain caused by secondary cancer that has spread to the bones. It can take a few weeks for you to feel the benefit of the radiotherapy treatment.
Your treating team may also have concerns about you developing a complication of bone metastases in the spine called Malignant Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC). They will discuss this with you and provide a separate leaflet ‘Malignant Spinal Cord Compression’. If you don’t have this leaflet and are unsure if you need it, please contact a member of your radiotherapy team.

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high energy X-rays to treat cancer. The organs and tissues of the body are made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Radiotherapy causes damage to the cancer cells in the treated area. Although normal cells are also affected, they can repair themselves and are able to recover. Radiotherapy is a local treatment. This means it only affects the part of the body that is treated. When you are having your radiotherapy you do not feel anything and it does not make you radioactive. It is perfectly safe for you to be with other people, including children, throughout your treatment.

You will have your radiotherapy on a treatment machine called a Linear Accelerator as shown here.

Radiotherapy is given by male and female therapy radiographers who are highly trained in the accurate planning and delivery of radiotherapy treatment.
You will see your radiographers at each treatment session and they will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Students**

Leeds Cancer Centre radiotherapy department is a training centre for radiographers. Both male and female students may be present on the treatment units. However, they are supervised at all times. If you do not wish students to be present during your treatment please speak to a member of staff. This will not affect your treatment or care.

**Pregnancy**

It is advisable that women **do not** become pregnant while having cancer treatment because the radiotherapy can have an effect on the unborn child. It is suggested that you use suitable form of contraception (e.g. condoms). For more information see the ‘Contraception and risk of pregnancy during cancer treatment’ leaflet. Please do not hesitate to ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns about these issues.

**Planning your treatment**

Your first appointment for radiotherapy will be a planning appointment. This will be used to gather all the information we need to accurately plan your treatment. You will be contacted by phone, with an appointment for your radiotherapy planning session.

You may see your clinical oncologist (or a member of their team) at this appointment. This is an ideal opportunity for you to ask questions. If you wish to go ahead with the treatment
and you have not consented for your radiotherapy treatment in another hospital, this will be completed at this visit. You will be asked to sign a form giving your consent to treatment.

**What to bring with you**

- a list of all questions you may have;
- an up-to-date list of all the medications you are taking (including inhalers, sprays, vitamins or herbal products);
- any medication (including painkillers) that you may need during your visit;
- something to eat, drink and something to occupy yourself with, as this first visit can be quite lengthy (several hours).

**Mould Room**

Radiotherapy involves exact positioning of the radiation beam, so you will need to stay very still while you are having treatment. The best way to help you keep still depends on which part of your body is to be treated. To help you stay still when treating the neck area, we may make a mask for your head and shoulders. You will wear your mask for your planning scan and treatments.

You will be given an appointment to attend Mould Room where the masks are made. If you are having treatment to a different part of your body a mask is not needed.
If you have any concerns about the mask, please let your clinical oncologist or a member of their team know. We have a support team who will help you.

Your planning scan

In order to plan your treatment you will have a CT scan. This is done on a machine called a CT Simulator, shown here in the photograph. This is a CT scanner that allows the images to be sent to the radiotherapy computer planning system.

There will be several members of staff present at your scan.

The scan will be taken with you lying in the same position as for your treatment. The radiographers will draw some marks onto your mask or skin, to be used as a reference for your treatment. The actual scan will only take a few minutes. At the end of the scan if you don’t have a mask the skin marks will be replaced by permanent marks.

These marks are no bigger than a freckle and will be used each day for your treatment.

The permanent marks help us to reproduce your treatment with accuracy each day. It also means that you can wash without worrying about your marks coming off.
Following the scan you will receive the times of your first appointments on the treatment machine, which will normally be in a few days’ time. The radiographers will talk to you about any further appointments you have.

**Having your treatment**

Please report to the radiotherapy main reception so they can check you in and show you round to the treatment machine where you will have your treatment. The radiographers will explain what will happen and answer any questions that you may have. The number of treatments you will be having will be confirmed and you will be given a list with all the appointments you need.

The department is open 8.00 am to 6.30 pm Monday to Friday. Whenever possible you will be treated at the time of day that suits you, but this cannot always be arranged or guaranteed.

Although you have the small permanent marks on your skin, the radiographers may need to draw around them each time you come for treatment. This is part of the quality checking procedure for your treatment. If you have pen marks on your
skin you may prefer to wear older clothing as the marks may discolour fabric. It is also generally advisable to wear loose clothing around the treated area.

Treatment takes up to 20 minutes each day. The treatment machine is only switched on for a fraction of this time. For most of the time the radiographers are carefully placing you and the machine in the correct position for your treatment.

The machine will move around you but does not touch you.

Once you are in the correct position the radiographers will leave the room to switch on the machine. You will only be alone for a few moments at a time. The radiographers will be watching you on a closed circuit TV monitor (CCTV) during treatment. The CCTV camera is not recording or saving any images.

There is also an intercom system so the radiographers can talk to you. Please let us know if you would like to use this.

Each radiotherapy treatment room is fitted with an alert system. If you need assistance at any point during your treatment press the button and the radiographers will come straight back to you.

Although you have to lie still, you can breathe and swallow normally during your treatment.

The machine stops automatically after your prescribed dose of treatment has been given. The machine can also be stopped at any time if needed.
The treatment machines make a high pitched noise when they are switched on. You do not feel anything.

Please tell the radiographers how you are feeling. If you have any problems or questions, please let them know.

Some days the radiotherapy department may be very busy and your appointment time may be delayed. We will keep you informed of any delays, please see the information screens in the waiting areas. For appointment queries please telephone the Radiotherapy Reception Desk on 0113 206 8940.

Side-effects of treatment

After your treatment you may experience some side-effects. Not everyone will experience all of these reactions. If you do experience any of the following side-effects, do not worry, they are normal reactions to treatment and are temporary. They usually begin soon after your radiotherapy treatment, may last for several weeks after it has finished and then slowly settle down. Please tell us how you are feeling, particularly if your symptoms worsen, so that we can advise and treat you.

Nausea

If you are being treated near the middle of your back or your abdomen you may experience nausea. This is usually prevented by prescribing you an anti-sickness medicine.

Pain

You may experience increased pain called ‘pain flare’, soon after treatment. You should continue to take any medication you are taking for pain relief. Occasionally this may need to be increased for a short period and you should contact your GP, District Nurse or Macmillan Nurse to arrange this.
You may find your pain improves within days of treatment but it may take up to several weeks or more to feel the benefits of treatment.

Please read the information leaflet enclosed with any medications, this will explain any side-effects you may experience when taking them. If you are at all concerned about any side-effects you are experiencing please talk to your pharmacist, nurse specialist or GP.

**Skin reaction**

Before you go in for your treatment the radiographer will explain what will happen to your skin and how to look after it. They will also give you a leaflet to take home. The same will happen at the end of your treatment. If you are concerned about your skin reaction please talk to your radiographers or contact the nursing staff in: **Princess Royal Suite on 0113 206 7587**.

**Tiredness (fatigue)**

Radiotherapy can make you feel more tired than usual, especially if you have to travel a long way for treatment each day.

There are things you can do to help yourself:

- Gentle exercise can help reduce the symptoms of fatigue.
- Having enough to drink can prevent tiredness from dehydration.
- You may find it easier to eat small meals and snacks more often, rather than face a big meal.
- An early daytime nap may help as long as this does not stop you sleeping at night.
• Try to pace yourself, listen to what your body is telling you, rest if you need to.
• Ask for help with daily tasks if needed.

There is a Macmillan information leaflet available ‘Coping with fatigue’. If you would like a copy, or support with your fatigue please ask a member of staff.

Follow-up appointments

These can vary, you may be sent a follow-up appointment through the post to see the clinical oncologist 4-6 weeks after your treatment has finished. Alternatively follow-up care may be with the consultant at your local hospital.

The radiographers will let you know which is the case for you.

Leeds Cancer Support

Leeds Cancer Support complements care provided by your clinical team. We offer access to information and a wide range of support, in a welcoming environment for you, your family and friends.

Level -2 Radiotherapy Department
Tel: 0113 206 7603 8.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday

Level 1 Oncology Outpatients Unit
Tel: 0113 206 8816 10.00am to 4.00pm.

The Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre
Tel: 0113 206 6498 10.00am-4.00pm Monday to Friday.

You can also email on: leedsth-tr.cancersupport@nhs.net
Macmillan Cancer Support
Freephone 0808 808 0000, 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday.
A textphone service for deaf and hard of hearing people on 18001 0808 808 0000.
website: www.macmillan.org.uk