

Radiotherapy for Bone Pain

Information for patients



Leeds Cancer
Centre

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 will include radiographers and clinical nurse specialists but may also include social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists 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 have any questions after reading this leaflet, please speak to the team looking after you or ring the numbers at the end of the leaflet. Staff will make every effort to meet your individual needs or will direct you to the person who can help.

All your radiotherapy planning and treatment will take place in the Radiotherapy Department on level -2, Bexley Wing, Leeds Cancer Centre (LS9 7TF).

Radiotherapy reception Tel: 0113 206 8940

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 (called bone 'metastases'). It can take a few weeks for you to feel the benefit of the radiotherapy treatment.

There is also a complication of bone metastases in the spine called Malignant Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC). Your treatment team will discuss this with you if you are at risk of developing MSCC and will provide a separate leaflet called '**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 and other types of radiation to treat cancer. 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. You may hear a buzzing noise when the machine is switched on.

It is perfectly safe for you to be with other people, including children and anyone who may be pregnant throughout your treatment.

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



How often is it given?

Radiotherapy treatment ranges from a single treatment to treatment given daily for up to 10 sessions. Treatment is usually given daily, Monday to Friday however your treatment may **not** start on a Monday.

Your treatment will usually be given as an outpatient.

Visiting us before your treatment

If you would like to visit the radiotherapy department before starting treatment, please call **0113 206 7603**. This visit can be very useful as you can find out more information about radiotherapy.



'I was so pleased to see the machines before my treatment and the staff were so helpful and really put my mind at rest.'

Who will I meet?

Therapeutic radiographers

Radiotherapy is given by therapeutic radiographers of any gender, 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.

Student radiographers

The radiotherapy department is a training centre for therapeutic radiographers. They are supervised at all times. If you do not wish students to be present, please speak to a member of staff. This will not affect your treatment or care.

Others involved in your care

You may meet other staff whilst you are coming for radiotherapy. Everyone you meet will introduce themselves, tell you their job title and explain the role they have in your care.

Important advice before your treatment

Pregnancy

It is very important that patients who are of child bearing potential are not pregnant at the start of a course of radiotherapy and that they **do not become pregnant** during a course of radiotherapy because it can have an effect on the unborn child. Use an effective form of contraception, for example condoms, coil, depo injection or contraceptive pill.

For more information see the '**Contraception and 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. We will contact you by phone, with an appointment for your radiotherapy planning session. Directions to the hospital and transport arrangements will be discussed with you at this point.

Some tests and scans may be needed to help plan your treatment. We will explain which of these you will need when your appointment is made. 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 have not previously consented to your treatment you will be asked to sign a consent form.

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 that you may need during your visit;
- something to eat and drink and something to occupy yourself with, as this first visit can be quite lengthy (several hours).

Mould Room (when treating neck, chest or armpit area)

If you require radiotherapy to the neck, upper chest or armpit area then you may need an appointment with the mould room team. If you are having treatment to another part of the body this is not required.

Radiotherapy involves exact positioning of the radiation beam, so you will need to stay very still while you are having treatment. To help you stay still we may make a mask for your head and shoulders. You will wear your mask for your planning scan and treatments. There is a leaflet available giving more information.



You will be given an appointment to attend Mould Room where the masks are made. If you have any concerns about the mask, please let your clinical oncologist or a member of their team know. We have a specialist team available who can support you.

Your team can contact them for you, or you can contact them on: **0113 206 7616** or email: leedsthtr.rtpatientsupport@nhs.net

Your planning scan

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

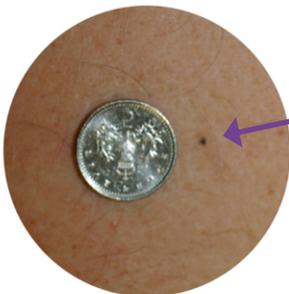
There will be several members of staff present at your scan.

The purpose of the planning scan is to allow planning of the radiotherapy. They are not diagnostic scans and are not reported on.

The scan will be taken with you lying in the same position as for your treatment. The radiographers will draw some marks on you, to be used as a reference for your treatment.



You will then be scanned, which will only take a few minutes and at the end of the scan the skin marks will be replaced by a small permanent mark (tattoo).



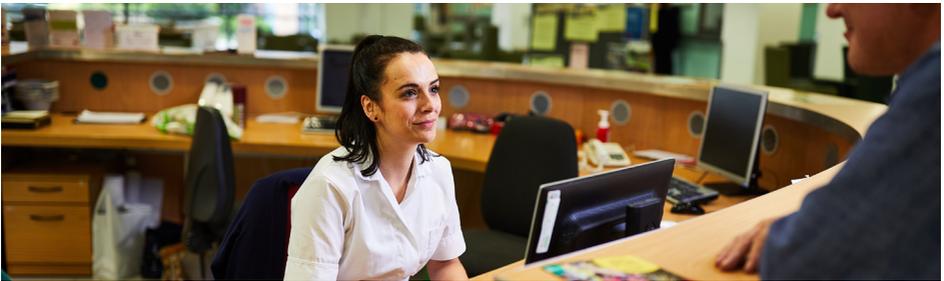
Permanent mark next to five pence piece

These permanent marks help us to ensure that you are in the same position each day.

It also means that you can wash without worrying about your marks coming off.

Following the scan the radiographers will give you the time of your first appointment on the treatment machine and will talk to you about any further appointments you have.

Having your treatment



When you arrive for your treatment you should go to the radiotherapy reception desk at the entrance of the radiotherapy department. On the first occasion you will be given all your appointments and be escorted to the waiting area for your machine.

The radiographers will explain what will happen and answer any questions that you may have.

Treatment is usually given daily Monday to Friday however your treatment may start on any day of the week. Whenever possible you will be treated at the time of day that suits you, but this cannot always be arranged or guaranteed. There may be occasions when you may have a longer stay in the department or be asked to attend at a different time, for example to see your oncologist.

You may need to partly undress and put on a gown, the radiographers discuss this with you when you first attend the department.

The radiographers will position you, and adjust the treatment couch and machine to the correct positions. For the first treatment we will also take images to check the accuracy of the treatment which will take a few more minutes.



These images do not monitor your condition but are purely for treatment accuracy.

You will be asked to stay as still as possible during the treatment but you should breathe and swallow normally. 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 (CCTV) monitor 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. If you would like to listen to music during your treatment, please let us know.

The treatment only takes a few minutes but you will be in the treatment room for about 10-20 minutes. The machine stops automatically after your prescribed dose of treatment has been given. The radiographers can stop the machine at any time if needed. The treatment machine makes a buzzing sound when switched on. You do not feel anything.

The radiographers may need to come in and out part way through each treatment.

After treatment is complete the radiographers will come back into the room and help you off the couch.

On some days the radiotherapy department may be busy and there may be a delay before your treatment. We will keep you informed of any delays, please see the delay signs in the waiting areas. It may be a good idea to bring something to eat and drink with you, including any supplement drinks you have been asked to have and any medication you may need. There is a restaurant and café available on level 0.

Your treatments will generally be on the same machine, although if you are having more than one treatment there may be days when this machine is being serviced and your treatment will be in a different room.

It is very important that you do not miss treatment days as it may make your treatment less effective. If you feel you are unable to attend for any reason please telephone us so that we can discuss this with you. If you have any queries about your appointment times please discuss these with the radiotherapy co-ordinators on your treatment unit.

For appointment queries please telephone the radiotherapy reception desk 0113 206 8940 for further advice.

Side-effects of treatment

Side-effects can be divided into short term (acute) effects that happen during or soon after treatment, and long term effects occurring months or years later. Some side-effects are common, whilst others are rare. The area and amount of treatment given to you will affect which side-effects are most likely to happen to you. Your clinical oncologist will discuss this with you. If you develop any radiotherapy side-effects you will be given advice and support by your healthcare team.

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; it 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.

Tiredness (fatigue)

Nearly all patients having radiotherapy will feel tired. Be prepared to take things easy during treatment and allow for extra rests. Fatigue usually improves in the weeks to months after treatment. There is a Macmillan information leaflet available and if you would like a copy, or support with your fatigue please ask a member of staff.

Things you can do to help include:

- Gentle exercise can help reduce the symptoms of fatigue.
- Having enough to drink can prevent tiredness from dehydration.
- Small meals or snacks eaten more often than three times a day may be easier to face.
- Try to get a good night's sleep where possible, a daytime nap may help.
- Try to pace yourself, listen to what your body is telling you, rest if you need to.
- Pick out the things that you enjoy, and try to accept help with other tasks.
- Little and often is the rule of thumb.

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.

Skin reaction

The skin in the treated area starts to redden or darken about 10 days after the start of radiotherapy treatment. It may become dry and itchy.

Avoid hair removal where possible, including shaving, waxing, cream and lasers unless advised otherwise by your consultant, nurse or radiographer.

Before you start 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.

If you are concerned about your skin reaction please talk to your radiographers or contact the review clinic nursing staff in the Princess Royal Suite, telephone: **0113 206 7587**.

Follow-up appointments

Follow-up appointments 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 revert back to your local primary care providers.

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

Further information and support

If you have any questions please ask your hospital team. We all have our own ways of coping with difficulties.

Some people have a close network of family and friends who provide emotional support. Others would rather seek help from people who are not involved with their illness.

The following are also available as sources of information and support that you may wish to use.

Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS)

Your CNS is available to discuss any aspect of your treatment with you. You will be seen by a CNS before your treatment. This is to offer support and advice about the practicalities and effects of your treatment and answer any questions you may want to ask.

Your CNS will also assess and discuss any physical, psychological, social, occupational and spiritual needs that you may have. They can refer you to other services if needed, for instance, benefits advice.

You should be given a 'key worker' as a contact for support through your treatment; this is usually your CNS.

Macmillan Specialist Radiographer and Macmillan Radiotherapy Nurse Specialist

Sometimes people need more help if they are feeling depressed, very anxious or are having problems with their treatment. If this is the case you may benefit from seeing the Macmillan radiographer or nurse specialist.

Your oncologist, radiographer or nurse can refer you at any point before or during your treatment.

Car Parking

When you are coming for radiotherapy planning and treatment your parking is **free** in the on-site multi-story car park. Please ask for more information at the radiotherapy main reception desk.

Local Support Services

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.

We can be found in the information lounges in Bexley Wing and also in the purpose built Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre.

The Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre

This centre offers a variety of free health & wellbeing and supportive therapies for patients, their family members and carers. These include hypnotherapy, mindfulness coaching, acupuncture (for hot flushes) and pilates.

Contact numbers for Leeds Cancer Support

Information Lounge Level -2 Radiotherapy Department

Open from 8.00am - 6.00pm Tel: **(0113) 206 7603**

Information Centre Level 1 Outpatients Department

Open from 9.00am - 4.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 206 8816**

Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre

Open from 9.00am - 4.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 206 6498**

All the above services can be emailed on:

leedsth-tr.cancersupport@nhs.net

Maggie's Centre

If you or someone you love has cancer you may have lots of questions. Maggie's is a warm, welcoming place where you can meet people who are experiencing similar things to you.

You may also be able to find support groups specific to your needs and get advice and information from their professional staff.

You don't need an appointment and all support is free.

Open Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00pm. Tel: **(0113) 457 8364**

Address: St James's Hospital (next to the multi storey car park), Alma Street, Leeds LS9 7BE

Email: leeds@maggiescentres.org

Website: maggiescentres.org

National Support Organisations

Macmillan Cancer Support

Freephone: **0808 808 0000**, 8am to 8pm seven days a week.

A textphone service for deaf and hard of hearing people on **18001 0808 808 0000**

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

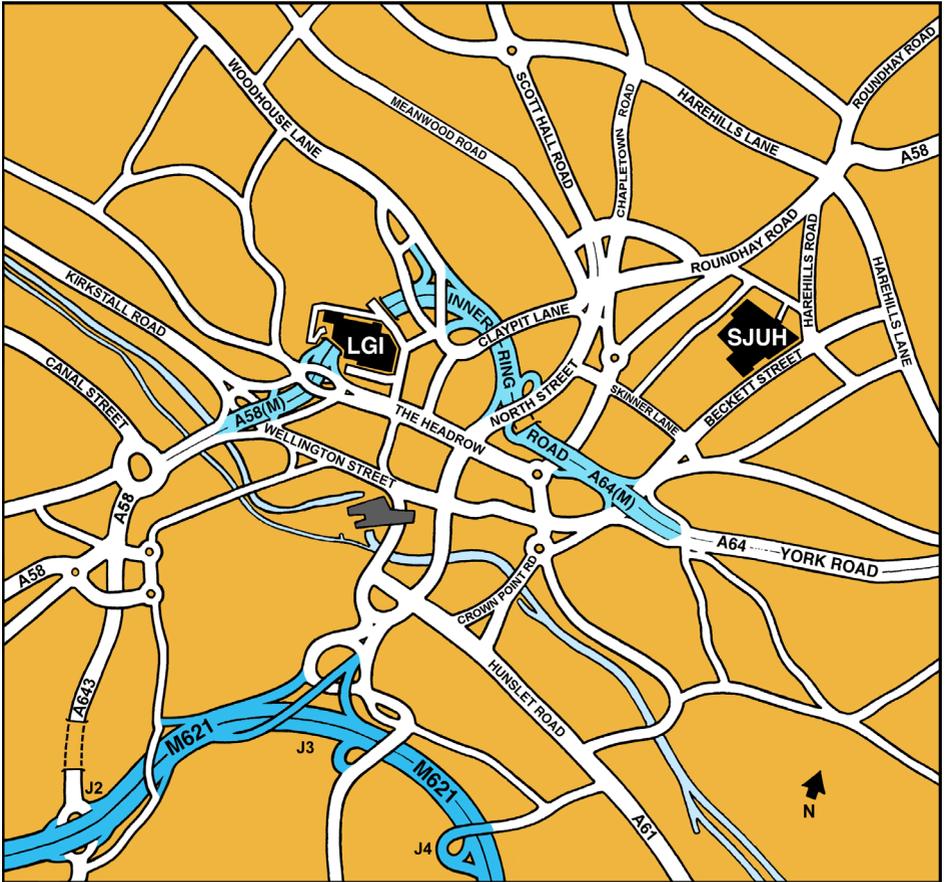
Live Through This

A cancer support and advocacy charity for the LGBTIQ+ community.

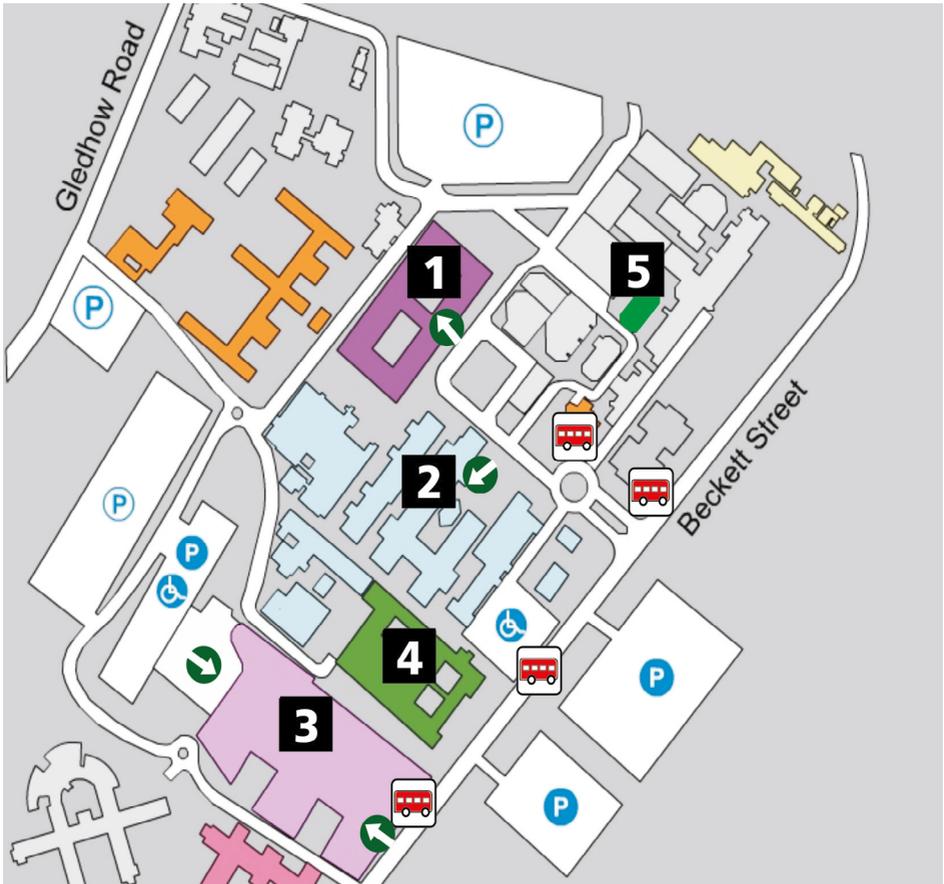
Email: contact@livethroughthis.co.uk

Website: <https://livethroughthis.co.uk>

How to find us



St James's University Hospital - site plan



- 1** Gledhow Wing
- 2** Lincoln Wing
- 3** Bexley Wing
- 4** Chancellors Wing
- 5** Robert Ogden Centre

-  Entrances
-  Visitor parking
-  Disabled parking
-  Staff parking
-  Bus stops



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Your views matter

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