

Arden Cancer Centre

Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Treatment to the Bladder

Introduction

As part of your treatment plan your doctor has recommended radiotherapy treatment at the Arden Centre. The aim of this booklet is to provide you with information about the centre and about radiotherapy including the possible side effects of your treatment.

Please read this information and ask any questions that you may have. Contact numbers are provided at the end of this booklet.

Where is the Arden Centre?

The Arden Centre is situated in the west wing of University Hospital Coventry. Please visit the University Hospital web site for up to date maps and directions:

www.uhcv.nhs.uk.

How shall I travel?

By car

You can drive whilst having radiotherapy treatment unless you have been advised not to for another reason.

Sat Nav postcode: CV2 2DX

At busy times it can be very difficult to park so please allow extra time. There are several visitor car parks across the site and there are drop-off points near the main entrance and the Women's and Children's entrance which allow for 10 minutes of free parking. Disabled car parking facilities are located near the main entrance. Charges apply in all car parks and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) is live across all visitor car parks, this means that our car parks no longer issue tickets at barriers and instead read your number plate as you enter. Payment is then required at one of the payment machines before exiting the car park and can be made using cash, card or contactless. Payment can also be made by telephone or online before midnight, see the trust website for details.

However, you are entitled to free parking whilst on radiotherapy treatment, you will need to give your registration number to the Arden Centre receptionist on



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arrival, if you don't know your registration number we suggest you make a note of it or take a photo of the number plate. Please note that free parking does not include clinic appointments, complementary therapy and counselling appointments, all of which must be paid for.

Public Transport

Many bus routes include the hospital with buses driving onto the site, stopping close to the main entrance. **For more information about bus services to University Hospital call the traveline on: 0870 608 2608 or visit www.networkwestmidlands.com.**

Hospital transport

Hospital transport is available where there is a medical need, not for social or financial reasons. If you receive Disability Living Allowance Mobility Component or have a vehicle under the mobility scheme you may not be entitled to access hospital transport. If you need hospital transport and feel that you are eligible, you will need to book it yourself, giving 48 hours notice. You will need to telephone:

West Midlands Ambulance Service

01926 310312 (for bookings only)
01926 488410 (for queries on day of travel only)

Leicestershire Ambulance Service / Arriva / Ambuline

0845 2669662

Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL

0843 2086888

Worcestershire Acute Trust Transport Service

0121 3079116 (for bookings)
01926 310311 (for queries on day of travel)

In most cases you will not be able to bring anyone with you. Whilst your transport will be booked to get you to the hospital for your appointment time this cannot be guaranteed. If this is the case, you will be treated as soon as possible after you arrive.

Due to the demand on the hospital transport service, patients will often be waiting at the Arden Centre to be taken home for some considerable time. We advise that where possible, patients make their own travel arrangements.

If you have to rely on the hospital transport service, please ensure that you bring food, drinks and any medication that you may need for the day with you. There is a refreshment kiosk available to buy snacks and drinks which is open from 10.00am - 4.00pm.

Transport Schemes

There are transport schemes operating in some areas. These schemes will charge a mileage rate which varies. For more information please ask to speak to the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist.

Travel costs

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The NHS Hospital Travel Cost Scheme enables people in receipt of certain benefits or who are on a low income to claim back some of their travel costs. Please ask to speak to the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist for more information.

Prescriptions

All cancer patients are entitled to free prescriptions. If you haven't already got an exemption card please ask a member of staff for an application form.

Appointments

The department is usually open from 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday and is closed at weekends and on public holidays.

Radiotherapy treatment machines are very complex; they are maintained by a team of in house physicists and technicians. Delays in treatment can occur due to machine breakdowns and servicing.

Breaks in treatment due to public holidays and machine maintenance do not affect most people's treatment. However, some patients may be asked to come in for treatment on these days, when a different treatment machine could be used.

It is not advisable for you to miss any other appointments, but if it is unavoidable please talk to the radiographers who are treating you.

The radiographers arrange treatment appointment times. Every effort will be made to give you times that you prefer, but with a heavy workload this cannot be guaranteed. It is important that we have a contact telephone number for you as we often have to telephone patients at short notice about appointments or with other information. If your telephone is set to bar incoming calls from withheld numbers, please give us an alternative telephone number.

Consent forms

Before you undergo this procedure you will be required to sign a consent form which indicates that your doctor has explained the treatment procedure and any possible side effects to you.

Pacemakers

If you have a pacemaker please mention this to both your doctor and also the radiographers, before your first treatment.

Pregnancy

If you are, or become, pregnant at any time before or during your treatment it is important to inform a member of staff as soon as possible. There is a significant risk to an unborn baby from radiotherapy.

For advice on contraception please speak to your consultant or GP.

Chemotherapy

Your doctor may also prescribe chemotherapy to be administered during your course of radiotherapy. You will be given specific written information and consented separately for this.

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What is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy radiation, usually x-rays, to kill cancer cells in the area being treated. Radiotherapy can damage normal cells in the treatment area too but they can usually repair themselves, whereas cancer cells can't. The damage to normal cells results in some side effects but radiotherapy is planned very carefully to avoid treating as much healthy tissue as possible in order to reduce these side effects.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called Therapy Radiographers on machines called Linear Accelerators, although some superficial skin treatments are given on smaller machines.

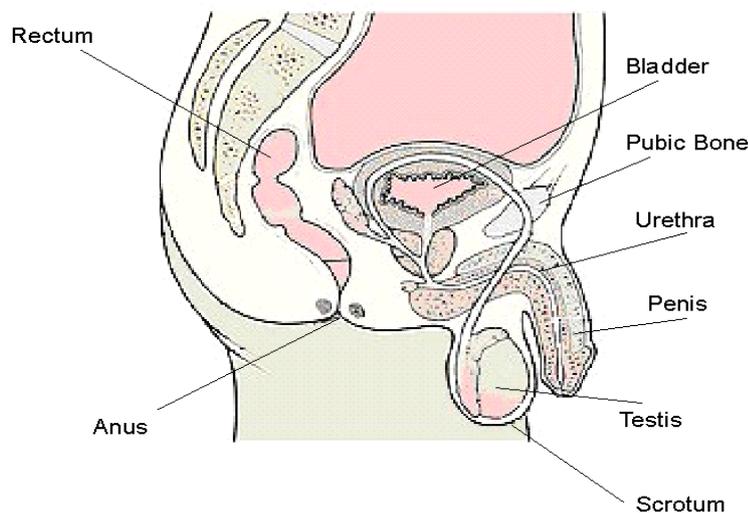
Both male and female staff will treat you. We are a teaching hospital and have student radiographers on placement in radiotherapy who are supervised by trained staff.

What is treatment planning?

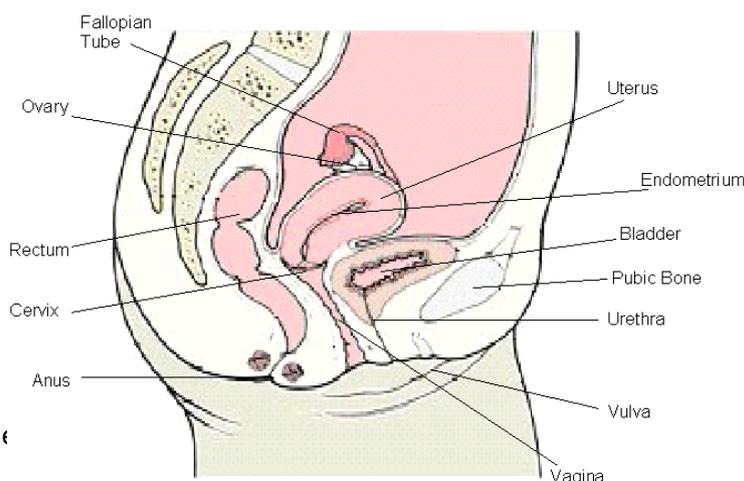
Usually a period of planning or preparation is required before your treatment can start. This may involve an initial visit and then a gap of a few weeks before your treatment starts, during which time doctors, physics staff and radiographers are preparing your treatment.

You will be required to remove the clothing from your pelvis for your planning visit and subsequent treatment. Only your pelvis will need to be uncovered and every effort will be made to keep you as covered up as possible. Gowns are available if you need one.

Male Pelvis



Female Pelvis



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Preparing for Planning and Treatment

Your doctor has requested a CT scan of your pelvis to plan your course of radiotherapy. This will show the areas we need to treat and those we need to avoid. We recognise that the bladder and rectum move a little bit internally on a day-to-day basis and a period of preparation helps to minimise this movement.

To help us to treat the same area each day we would be grateful if you could spend a little time to prepare for your scan and for each radiotherapy treatment.

- For each appointment it is helpful if you have an **empty rectum and an empty bladder**.
- It is requested that you **open your bowel on the morning of your CT scan and then daily whilst receiving your radiotherapy treatment**. If appropriate pass wind or have a further bowel motion before the CT scan and each treatment session.
- **It may be necessary to take a mild laxative before your CT scan and the first few treatments to help you empty your bowel. If you are unsure about what to take please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.**
- You will need to have an empty bladder for your treatment planning and your radiotherapy treatment. This is so that we can keep the area to be treated to a minimum and reduce the side effects of treatment as much as possible.
- **Please do not drink for an hour before your appointment. You will then be asked to empty your bladder immediately before you are called in for your planning scan and then prior to your daily radiotherapy treatments.**

If you are uncertain about any of these instructions please telephone the Macmillan radiotherapy specialists on 024 7696 7290

Please do not be concerned if you can't always follow this advice. Your doctor always allows a safe margin to ensure the bladder is treated correctly. On occasions we may need to repeat the scan after further preparation so that your treatment can be safely planned.

Contrast

Sometimes a contrast medium is used to help the radiographers, doctors and physics team to see organs more clearly on the CT scan. This can be given orally, injected into a vein or both. You will be told if you need contrast and given information about it. If you have had contrast before and had any kind of reaction to it please let your doctor or the radiographers know. This is only required for treatment planning and not whilst you are on daily radiotherapy.

Skin marks

When your treatment is planned you will have pen marks put onto your skin. These marks correspond to the area that will be treated. In most cases, with your permission, we can put tiny permanent dots of dye just beneath the skin, which will not wash off, called a tattoo. If we are unable to do this you will need to keep felt tip pen marks on your skin for all of your treatment.

Treatment

The radiographers will deliver the treatment as prescribed by your consultant. To do this they will ask you to remove any clothing from the treatment area. It is essential to

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make sure treatment is given safely and accurately, and you will be positioned on the treatment couch in the same way as when your treatment was planned. You will need to have an empty bladder and bowel for each treatment as well as the CT planning scan.

The radiographers will line you up with the machine by dimming the room lights and using laser lights and a bright light from the machine. The machine may move around you during this process but in most cases will not touch you.

When you and the machine are in the correct position, the radiographers will leave the room to switch the machine on. You will need to lie quite still but can breathe normally. You will not feel anything during the treatment but the machine will make a buzzing noise and will move around you. The radiographers will be watching you throughout on closed circuit television cameras and can hear you on an intercom. They can switch the machine off and enter the room if you move or call them.

Once the machine has switched off there is no radiation present, you will not be radioactive and are safe to be near pregnant women and children.

Side Effects of Radiotherapy

Treatment is painless but can cause some side effects. It is unlikely that you will experience all of the side effects listed below, treatment affects people in different ways and it can be difficult to predict which side effects will affect you and how severe they will be.

Side effects can be thought of as early (acute) and late (chronic) effects.

Early side effects

These early side effects occur during your treatment and for a short while afterwards.

Effects on the bladder

- An increase in frequency of urination.
- A burning sensation when passing urine.
- A feeling of needing to pass urine urgently but only passing a small amount.
- Passing debris and blood.

We advise that you:

- Drink plenty of fluids, 2-3 litres a day
- Avoid drinks that can irritate the bladder such as fizzy drinks, tea, green tea, coffee and alcohol. Caffeine free alternatives are better but should still be drunk in moderation.
- Drink plenty of water or squash.

Please let the radiographers know if these effects are severe as urinary infection and retention are possible. **If at any time you feel you cannot pass urine at all you should seek urgent medical advice through your GP.**

Effects on the bowel

- A bloated and tender feeling in your tummy.
- An increase in the number of bowel movements.
- Passing a lot of wind.

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- Diarrhoea.

We advise that you:

- Eat a normal well balanced diet. Avoid foods that cause wind. If necessary we will advise you of a change of diet or medication. If you experience a loss of appetite or are struggling to eat, we can arrange for you to see a dietitian whilst you are attending for radiotherapy.

Effects on the skin

These are usually minimal for this type of treatment; however, the following could occur:

- Radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction similar to exposure to the sun in the area treated.
- Towards the end of treatment the skin may become red and/or dry and itchy.

We advise that you:

- Bathe/shower daily using a mild, non-perfumed soap;
- Don't have the water too hot or soak for too long;
- Use a soft towel to pat yourself dry;
- Don't use sun beds;
- Avoid wearing tight clothes in the area being treated;
- Using a gentle, sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) free moisturising cream, can help to soothe and moisturise the skin;
- You may continue to swim if your skin is not visibly red, providing that you wash the treatment area before and afterwards;
- Avoid extremes of temperature – hot or cold.

Other early effects of treatment

- Tiredness. If you feel tired try to rest as much as you can. Research has found that gentle exercise such as a short daily walk may help the symptoms of tiredness and fatigue.
- Nausea. Let the radiographers know, as we may be able to get a prescription for anti-sickness tablets or provide advice. Drink plenty.
- Hair loss can occur in the treatment area, so you may lose some pubic hair. It will grow back but may be thinner.
- The treatment does **not** make you radioactive.

Late side effects

Late effects of radiotherapy can occur months to years after you have completed your treatment. Modern machines and techniques have reduced some of these late effects.

- Bladder changes – can include a need to pass urine more frequently and urgently, reduced bladder capacity and occasionally blood in the urine.
- Bowel changes – rarely there can be narrowing or bleeding from the bowel.
- Impotence – radiotherapy can cause impotence in 30-40% of men occurring up to 2-5 years after treatment.
- Infertility - radiotherapy to the bladder can result in lowered sperm counts in men, and early menopause in women. This is because the bladder is close to the reproductive organs. If you are concerned about infertility talk to your consultant before your treatment begins.

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- **In women**, radiotherapy can cause a narrowing and shortening of the vagina, which may make sexual intercourse and vaginal examinations uncomfortable or difficult. You may be recommended to use a vaginal dilator which could help prevent this happening. This will be discussed with you during your radiotherapy. Radiotherapy may also cause some vaginal dryness for which lubricants are available on prescription.
- There is a very small risk of second cancers developing in adjacent areas in the years following your radiotherapy treatment.

Please discuss any new symptoms that you experience after your treatment, with your consultant in the follow up clinic.

If you are concerned about the late effects of radiotherapy treatment, or would like more information, please speak to your consultant or the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist.

Treatment for bladder cancer can make you want to go to the toilet more often. If you need to go to the toilet more often or more urgently, a Toilet Card is available that you can show to staff in places like shops or pubs. The card allows you to use their toilets without them asking awkward questions and is available from Macmillan Cancer Support. We have a supply of these available in the department, please ask a member of staff.

Treatment reviews

At some point during your treatment you may be booked in for a 'treatment review'. This review can be with either a review radiographer or a doctor. The aim of this review is to discuss any side effects that you may be experiencing as a result of your treatment, and any side effects that may occur as the treatment continues.

It is not usually possible to give you any information on how effective the treatment so far has been at these review sessions for two reasons:

- Firstly, although we take images of the treatment area during your radiotherapy, they are to check the position of the treatment field and are not detailed enough to show us how well the treatment is working.
- Secondly, there is a delay in the way that radiotherapy works, so the effects of treatment can't be assessed until a number of weeks after the treatment has finished.

After treatment

The early side effects from the treatment will continue for several weeks after the treatment course has been completed.

After finishing treatment, you will receive an appointment to see your consultant between six and eight weeks later. If you haven't received this within three weeks of completing treatment please telephone radiotherapy reception on 024 7696 7272.

Your urology surgeon will usually be asked to look inside the bladder about three months after the end of treatment to see how effective it has been.

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If you have any problems before then, you can contact the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists** on **024 7696 7290**.

Counselling

There is a counselling service available at the Arden Centre, for more information speak to your specialist nurse, doctor or radiographer, or telephone 024 7696 7478.

Complementary therapy

Aromatherapy, reiki, massage, reflexology and yoga are available to oncology patients. Therapists are volunteers and provide their services to patients free of charge. The counselling and complementary services are by appointment only, please ask a member of staff, or telephone 024 7696 7290

The Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist is available in the department to help you with any queries concerning the above. Please ask at the reception desk.

Information and Support

Macmillan Cancer Information Centre 024 7696 6052

We can offer free support, practical advice and information to anyone affected by cancer. No appointments are required and an answering machine facility is available. Open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm, the Centre is located on the ground floor in the main entrance.

You may find these information booklets useful:

Understanding Radiotherapy

Understanding Non-invasive Bladder Cancer

Understanding Invasive and Advanced Bladder Cancer

Pelvic Radiotherapy in Men – Managing Side Effects During Treatment

Pelvic Radiotherapy in Women – Managing Side Effects During Treatment

Managing the Late Effects of Pelvic Radiotherapy in Women

Managing the Late Effects of Pelvic Radiotherapy in Men

Useful telephone numbers

Arden Cancer Centre – Monday to Friday 8am – 5.30pm

Radiotherapy reception: 024 7696 7272

Radiotherapy Treatment Planning Radiographers: 024 7696 7454

Radiotherapy Information and advice: 024 7696 7290

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Oncology Ward 35: 024 7696 5525 or 024 7696 5528 or 024 7696 5531 (24 hour emergency advice only please)

NHS advice - use the 111 service

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00 www.macmillan.org.uk

Patient Information

Cancer Research UK: 0808 800 4040

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Patient Satisfaction

We hope that you have found this booklet helpful. We welcome your comments on the care that you experience and the service that we offer within the Arden Cancer Centre.

We ask that specific complaints be addressed to a member of staff so that, in line with University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust's complaints policy, they can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Written by Julia Biggs & Alison Crichton

(Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists)

With help and advice from the medical staff of the Arden Cancer Centre,
University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust,
Coventry CV2 2DX

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, we will do our best to meet your needs. Please contact 024 7696 7290.

This Trust operates a smoke free policy on the hospital site. Please respect other patients and staff and refrain from smoking whilst visiting the hospital. Thank you.

For help to stop smoking call the National smoke free Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or contact the hospital's stop smoking service 02476 964760.

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