

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Treatment to the Brain

## 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](http://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.



## Patient Information

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 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](http://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

## Patient Information

### **Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL**

0843 2086888

### **Worcestershire Acute Trust Transport Service**

0121 307 9116 (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 but 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 10am-4pm.

### **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.

### **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.

## Patient Information

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 both to 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.

If you are pregnant, it is sometimes possible to proceed with treatment and overcome the risk by adjusting your treatment plan. This would only be done with your consent following discussion with your consultant.

For advice on contraception please speak to your consultant or G.P.

## 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.

## 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.

Radiotherapy does not hurt, but you may experience some side effects as treatment progresses.

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.

**Please be aware that radiotherapy treatment areas are radiation controlled areas and access is restricted to staff and patients. If you need to be accompanied by a relative or friend please mention this at the reception desk. Young children are strictly prohibited from entering treatment areas and must remain in the waiting room.**

## 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 two to three weeks before your treatment starts, during which time doctors, physics staff and radiographers are preparing your treatment.

## Patient Information

### **Mould room**

It will be necessary to have a plastic mask (or mould) made before your treatment is planned. This means that we don't have to put marks on your face and will help you to keep your head still. There is a separate booklet describing this. Please ask for more information.

### **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 normally only required for treatment planning and not whilst you are on daily radiotherapy.

### **Planning CT Scanner**

You will be given an appointment to attend the department's CT Scanner to have your treatment planned. These are specialised CT scans, which are used to define the exact area to be treated. You will be scanned and treated in your mask.

### **Treatment**

The radiographers will deliver the treatment as prescribed by your consultant. It is essential to 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.

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. Periodically it is necessary to take some images of the treatment area during your actual treatment.

The treatment times are very short, but on days that this is done, you will be in the room a little longer. 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.

### **What are the side effects of treatment?**

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).

#### **Early side effects**

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

#### **Tiredness**

- Most people will feel tired as a result of having radiotherapy treatment to the brain. Tiredness will often come on gradually as the treatment progresses and may persist for some weeks after the treatment has finished.

## Patient Information

- If you feel tired try to rest or sleep. If you are feeling up to it, regular exercise can help, such as taking a short walk.
- Occasionally the tiredness can become worse a few weeks after the treatment and may make you feel irritable and drowsy. This is known as 'somnolence syndrome'. It may last a few weeks but will get better.

### Hair loss

- This is likely to begin about two weeks into your treatment. You will only lose hair from parts of the head that are treated, although you may have some hair loss on the opposite side of the head where the radiotherapy beam passes through. Sometimes the hair loss is permanent, where it does grow back it may be thin and patchy, a different colour or curly instead of straight. It may be up to three to six months after treatment before your hair re-growth is completed.
- You may want to cut your hair short before treatment to make hair loss easier to cope with.
- Wigs are generally not fully funded by the NHS, the cost to patients will depend on the type of wig chosen. However, patients on certain benefits or who are on a low income may be entitled to help with the cost of wigs. If you would like to see our hairdresser regarding a wig please ask a member of staff for details. Some people prefer to wear hats, scarves or turbans.

### Skin irritation

- The skin on the scalp and backs of the ears may become pink and itchy during your treatment and for a short while afterwards.
- To minimise this we advise that you wash your hair with tepid water, using a mild shampoo. Try to avoid washing your hair too often, and if you use a hairdryer put it on a cool setting. Avoid exposing the scalp to sun and wind as this can increase any irritation.
- Use an emollient (moisturiser) to soothe and moisturise the skin which is sodium lauryl Sulphate (SLS) free we do not recommend the use of any other creams. If you are unsure about which cream to use please ask one of your treatment radiographers.

### Headaches

- For some people the treatment can cause headaches. You may be advised to adjust your medication.

## Patient Information

### **Nausea**

- Radiotherapy to the brain can make you feel sick. Please mention this to the radiographers, nurse specialist or your doctor as medication can be prescribed or your steroids adjusted.
- It may help if you drink plenty of fluids, eat small meals and snacks throughout the day, avoid eating or preparing food when you feel sick and avoid fatty foods. Don't worry if you don't feel like eating much, but you must drink plenty.

### **Worsening of symptoms**

You may find that the symptoms from the brain tumour get worse during and shortly after the radiotherapy has been completed. This is usually due to the radiotherapy causing the brain tissue to swell slightly resulting in pressure. It may also be because we've asked you to reduce your steroids. Let your doctor, nurse specialist or the radiographers know if this happens, it may be necessary to increase the steroid dose temporarily.

### **Late side effects**

Late effects of radiotherapy can occur months to years after you have completed your treatment. They are determined by many factors such as the radiotherapy dose, the part of the brain treated and the amount of normal brain tissue treated. Your consultant will discuss with you any late effects that may be relevant to your treatment.

Late side effects of radiotherapy to the brain can include:

- Problems thinking clearly, or managing tasks you used to be able to do easily.
- Poor memory – in particular short term, which can be mistaken for confusion.
- Intellectual impairment – the ability to think clearly.
- Symptoms you had from your original tumour, e.g. visual disturbance, limb weakness, speech problems, balance and coordination problems.
- Affects on the pituitary gland - if the pituitary gland is included in the treatment area this can result in changes in hormone production which can cause a variety of symptoms. Discuss any changes in the way that you feel after treatment with your doctor.

## Patient Information

- The risk of developing cataracts, which causes a clouding of the vision in the affected eye. A small operation under a local anaesthetic can rectify this.

Only a small number of people will experience these side effects, your consultant will discuss with you any late effects that may be relevant to your treatment. Where these side effects do occur it is often possible to manage them with medication.

Very rarely radiotherapy to the brain can cause another brain tumour to develop many years after treatment.

## Treatment reviews

At some point during your treatment you may be booked in for a 'treatment review'. This review can be with a review radiographer, a doctor or a specialist nurse. 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 pictures 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 four and eight weeks later. At this appointment any further treatment or investigations will be discussed with you.

If you haven't received an appointment within three weeks of completing treatment please telephone radiotherapy reception on 024 7696 7272

## Patient Information

Some patients have oral chemotherapy before during or shortly after radiotherapy. If you are unsure about whether you should be taking this, please ask to see your consultant, clinical nurse specialist or the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist. If you would like information about chemotherapy, please ask a member of staff.

Many patients take steroids before, during and after treatment. There is a separate information sheet available about steroids, please ask your specialist nurse.

## 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, Indian head massage, reflexology and yoga are available to oncology patients. Therapists are volunteers and provide their services to patients free of charge.

Complementary therapies are by appointment only, please ask a member of staff, or telephone 024 7696 7290.

## Further information

**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 of the main entrance.

Or call Macmillan's national helpline 0808 808 0000

Website [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### You may find these booklets useful:

Understanding Brain tumours

Understanding Chemotherapy

Coping with Hair Loss

Understanding Radiotherapy

## Patient Information

Macmillan Cancer Support also produces fact sheets on different types of brain tumours

### Useful telephone numbers

**Arden Cancer Centre (Radiotherapy):** 02476 96 7492 Monday to Friday  
9.00am – 5.00pm

**Macmillan Neuro-Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist** 024 7696 5326

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

**Radiotherapy Information and advice:** 024 7696 7290

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

**Planning Radiographers:** 024 7696 7454

**NHS advice:** use the 111 service.

### 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's complaints policy, they can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

If you need help, information or advice, either during, or at any time after your course of treatment has finished, please telephone: 024 7696 7290, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm and speak to the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist**.

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 Alison Crichton or Julia Biggs on 024 7696 7290.

## Patient Information

This Trust operates a non-smoking policy on the hospital site. Please respect other patients and staff and refrain from smoking whilst visiting the hospital.

Stop Smoking services at UHCW Telephone 024 7696 4760

Help to stop smoking can be obtained from your local NHS Smoke free Service:

[www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

### **Document History**

Department:	Arden Cancer Centre
Contact:	02476967304
Updated:	November 2019
Review:	November 2020
Version:	12.3
Reference:	HIC/LFT/281/06