

Patient Information

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy (SABR) to Lymph Nodes

### What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy radiation to kill cancer cells in the area being treated. Radiotherapy can also damage normal cells in the treatment area which can cause some side effects. However, radiotherapy is planned very carefully to minimise treating as much healthy tissue as possible in order to reduce these side effects. The tissues usually heal, with an improvement in side effects and symptoms over time.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called Therapeutic Radiographers on machines called Linear Accelerators.

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.

For more information about radiotherapy and to watch our department video go to:

<https://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/our-services-and-people/our-departments/radiotherapy/>

### What is stereotactic ablative radiotherapy, (SABR)?

SABR is a way of delivering radiotherapy that allows us to give a higher dose of radiation to the tumour, increasing the chance of tumour control, without causing more side effects to normal tissue. Not everyone is suitable for SABR treatment. Your oncologist will discuss this with you.



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Since we are able to deliver a higher dose of radiation each time, overall treatment time for SABR is much shorter than for standard radiotherapy. Typically patients will have 3 or 5 treatments compared with 20 treatments for standard radiotherapy, (although each session will be longer than for standard radiotherapy).

### Consent forms

Before you have 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 and that you agree to go ahead with treatment. Patient information may also be collected and used for audit purposes within the radiotherapy department.

### Pacemakers

If you have a pacemaker, or implantable defibrillator, please mention this to both your doctor and the radiographers, before your first appointment as the performance of your device can be altered by the treatment and it may need testing before and after 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.

### What is treatment planning?

A period of planning or preparation is required before your treatment can start. This is to allow accurate “aiming” of the radiotherapy at your tumour and calculation of how to deliver the correct dose of radiation to it.

### CT Planning Scan

In order to treat you accurately and reduce side effects, your radiotherapy treatment must be carefully planned. This will involve having a CT scan in the radiotherapy department and then a gap of three to four weeks before

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your treatment starts, during which time doctors, physics staff and radiographers are planning your treatment.

For the CT scan and subsequent treatment, you will be required to remove your clothing. Only the part of your body that will be treated will be uncovered and every effort will be made to keep you covered where possible. You will be carefully positioned on the CT couch by the radiographers. This is the same position that you will be in everyday for your radiotherapy treatments.

### **Skin Marks**

At the scan, felt tip pen marks will be put on to your skin; these marks are used as reference for the planning process and during treatment. With your permission, we can put tiny permanent dots of dye just beneath the skin which will not wash off called tattoos. If we are unable to do this you will need to keep felt tip pen marks on your skin for all of your treatment.

### **Contrast**

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 by mouth, 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.

### **Bowel and bladder preparation**

For the CT scan and your daily radiotherapy you will need to have an empty bladder and empty bowels.

If your bowels aren't normally open daily we suggest that you:-

- Drink 2 litres (4 pints) of fluids daily;
- Continue with laxatives if you are using them already;
- If you don't have any laxatives speak to your GP or call the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist on 024 7696 7290.

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### **Treatment**

SABR is given in three, five or eight treatments, usually on alternate days.

The radiographers will deliver the treatment as prescribed by your consultant. Your treatment is given with you lying in the same position as you were in when you had your CT planning scan. The bed is then raised so it is closer to the machine.

The radiographers will dim the lights and use laser lights to line up your tattoos. Once you and the treatment machine are in the correct position, the radiographers leave the room to switch the machine on, you need to remain as still as possible and breathe normally. The treatment machine will move around you during the treatment, but nothing will touch you. You will not feel anything during the treatment, but the machine will make a buzzing noise.

The treatment times are around 45 minutes, images are taken beforehand to check that the treatment is correct before it is given. The radiographers watch you all the time on a monitor and will turn the machine off and enter the room if you move or call for help.

Occasionally on your first appointment we may need to carry out additional checks on the images we take, meaning this session will be classed as a 'practice' session and you will not receive any treatment on this day. Your treatment will then begin at your next appointment.

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

### **Side effects of treatment**

Treatment is painless and side effects are usually minimal. 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, listed below are side effects you may experience.

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The full benefit of the treatment is not usually reached until some weeks after the last treatment session. Side effects can be thought of as early (acute), and late (chronic), effects.

### **Early effects**

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

#### **Tiredness:**

Most people feel tired as a result of having radiotherapy treatment. Tiredness will often come on slowly as the treatment progresses and may continue for some weeks after treatment has finished. 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.

#### **Loss of appetite:**

Your appetite may vary during treatment and depending on where you are being treated you may feel nauseous. Eating little and often can help. Food supplements are available through your GP. You may be referred to a dietician if you are struggling with eating or given a prescription for anti-sickness tablets.

### **Effects on the skin**

The effects of radiotherapy on the skin are usually minimal for this type of treatment. However, radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction similar to exposure to the sun in the area treated. This may happen towards the end of treatment and during the first one or two weeks after treatment has finished.

### **Effects on the bladder**

- An increase in frequency of urination – can seem worse during the night.
- A burning sensation when passing urine.
- A feeling of needing to pass urine urgently but only passing a small amount.

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### **We advise that you:**

- Drink plenty of fluids, a minimum of 2 litres a day.
- Avoid drinks that can irritate the bladder such as tea, green tea, coffee and alcohol and acidic fruit juices 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 is possible. If at any time you feel you cannot pass urine at all you should seek urgent medical advice. There is a small risk (1-2%) of needing a urinary catheter in this scenario. This involves passing a tube called a catheter into the bladder in order to help you pass urine.

### **Effects on the bowel**

- An increase in the number of bowel movements.
- A feeling of needing to open your bowels, but passing little.
- Passing mucous and/or blood from the back passage.
- Soreness in the back passage.
- Passing a lot of wind.

### **We advise that you:**

Eat a normal, well balanced diet. If necessary we will advise you of a change of diet or medication. If required we can arrange for you to see a dietician in the department.

### **Late side-effects**

**Late side effects can occur many months to years after you have completed your treatment. They are determined by many factors, your consultant will discuss with you any late effects that may be relevant to your treatment, and these may include:**

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### **Damage to the bones**

Radiotherapy can make your bones more fragile in areas that are treated, such as the ribs, and can lead to osteoporosis.

### **Second malignancy**

There is a very small risk of developing a second cancer in the area treated beyond 10 years after the 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, your Clinical Nurse Specialist or the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist on 024 7696 7290.

### **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 6-8 weeks later. At this appointment any further treatments 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.

If you have any problems concerning your radiotherapy treatment you can contact the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist on 024 7696 7290.

### **Where is the Arden Centre?**

The Arden Centre is part of University Hospital Coventry. The entrance to the Arden Centre is situated to the left of the main hospital entrance.

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Please visit the University Hospital web site for up to date maps and directions. [www.uhcw.nhs.uk](http://www.uhcw.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 by the Arden Centre and near the main 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 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 see the Transport for West Midlands website: <https://www.twfm.org.uk/>

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### **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)

### **Thames Ambulance Service (Leicestershire)**

0345 241 3012

### **Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL**

0843 2086888

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

0300 0110017

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

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you may need for the day with you. There is a refreshment kiosk where you can buy snacks and drinks which is open from 10am-4pm.

## Transport Schemes

There are volunteer 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

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.

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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.

## 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.

## Smoking

It is strongly recommended that you **stop smoking** completely whilst getting radiotherapy. Smoking can make treatment side effects more severe, the treatment harder to tolerate and less effective.

For help to stop smoking contact the hospital's stop smoking service 0800 122 3780 or 07377 558478.

## 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.

### **Useful telephone numbers:**

**Lead SABR radiographer Alysha Forrest** 024 7696 7290

**Arden Cancer Centre** – 024 7696 7272 Monday to Friday (9.00am – 5.00pm)

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**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

**Macmillan Cancer Support:** 0808 808 00 00 [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

**Cancer Research UK:** 0808 800 4040 [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://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.

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 9.00am to 5:00pm and speak to the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist.

Written by Becky Hawkesford (Lead SABR radiographer), Alysha Forrest (Lead SABR radiographer), Julia Biggs & Alison Crichton (Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists) with help and advice from the medical staff of

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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 7272.

The Trust operates a non-smoking policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

### Document History

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