

Arden Cancer Centre

Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Treatment to the Bladder

What is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy radiation to kill cancer cells in the area being treated. Radiotherapy can damage normal cells in the treatment area which can cause some side effects. However radiotherapy is planned very carefully to protect 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/>

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

Pacemakers

If you have a pacemaker or implantable defibrillator, please mention this to your doctor and the radiographers before your first treatment 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.

Chemotherapy

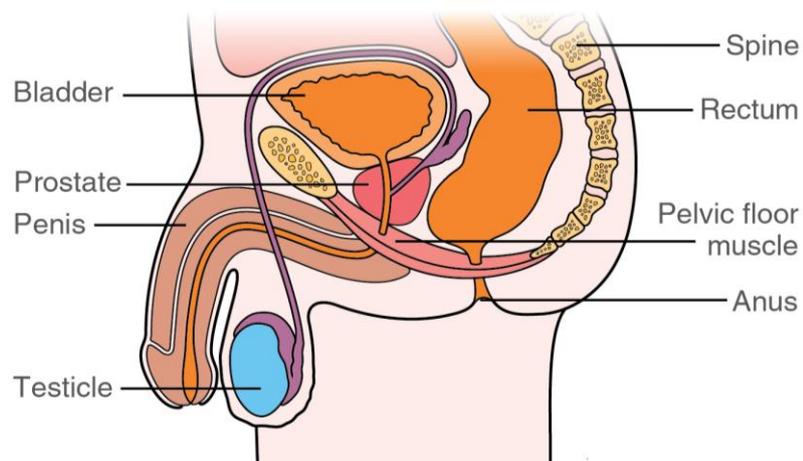
Your doctor may also prescribe chemotherapy to be administered during your course of radiotherapy. You will be given specific written information and consented separately for this. It is usually necessary to have weekly blood tests when on chemotherapy and radiotherapy together, if you have not been advised about this please ask.

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 to it.

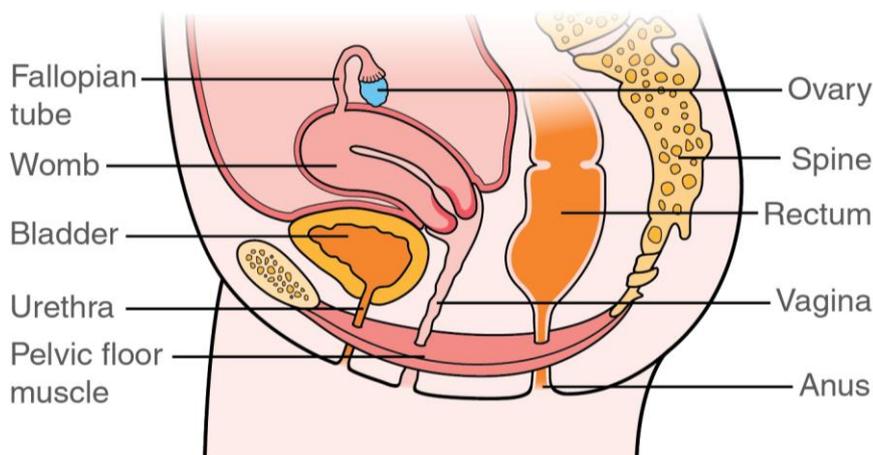
The diagrams below show the bladder and the proximity of surrounding structures.

Male Pelvis



Patient Information

Female Pelvis



"These images were produced by Macmillan Cancer Support and are reused with permission."

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 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 the clothing over your pelvis. Every effort will be made to keep you covered where possible. Gowns are available if you need one. You will be carefully positioned on the CT couch by the radiographers, lying on your back with sponges under your head, knees and feet for support. 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. After the scan, with your permission, the radiographers will put small permanent dots of dye just beneath the marks on your 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

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

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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.

Bladder and bowel preparation

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 bladder and an empty rectum.**

Empty bladder preparation

- 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 before your daily radiotherapy treatments.

Empty Rectum Preparation:

You should have an empty rectum for your CT planning scan and every treatment.

If you normally open your bowels fully every morning you need to do nothing further, however:-

- If you normally take laxatives then continue to do so.
- If your doctor prescribed laxatives and / or enemas use them as directed.
- If you **do not** usually open your bowels fully every morning and do not have any laxatives or enemas you should try a stimulant laxative such as Senna, starting 2-3 days before your CT scan.

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- When treatment is due to start, use the laxatives every day for 2 days before the start of your radiotherapy and throughout your treatment, but stop if your bowels become loose or your treatment radiographers advise otherwise.

Enemas

Your doctor or radiographer may have recommended micro-enemas to help you to have an empty rectum for your treatment. A micro-enema is a small enema that is inserted into the rectum (back passage) daily about 2 hours before your CT planning scan and each daily treatment. The enema is usually effective within 30 minutes. Your doctor will discuss this with you if it is needed and give you a prescription.

Please contact us for further advice if you have any concerns about being able to manage an empty bladder and an empty rectum for your CT planning scan. Telephone: 024 7696 7290 or 024 7696 7493.

Wind

If you have excess wind in the bowel this will show on your CT planning scan and treatment scans.

It is important to eat regularly, not eating in order to achieve an empty rectum will cause more wind, so please do not skip meals.

For 2 days before your CT planning scan and throughout treatment:

- Reduce green leafy vegetables to minimise wind.
- Avoid food or drink which gives you wind.
- Avoid fizzy drinks and chewing gum.

Advice is available for patients having problems with wind, constipation or diarrhoea. Please contact the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist 024 76 967290.

If you are not sure about any of these instructions please telephone the Macmillan radiotherapy specialists on 024 7696 7290.

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Please do not be concerned if you can't always follow this advice. Your doctor always allows a safe margin to make sure 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.

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 important 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. You will need to have an empty bladder and bowel for each treatment.

The radiographers will dim the room lights and use laser lights to line up your tattoos. 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. The treatment machine will move around you during 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 very short, 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 assistance. Most people will be in the treatment room for about 15-20mins.

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.

Your radiotherapy doctor will discuss with you the total number of treatments that you need and how often you will need to attend the department.

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.

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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.
- Stinging 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.**

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.
- 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

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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:

- Wash treated area daily with your usual soap or shower gel and pat your skin dry with a soft towel.
- Apply your usual skin moisturiser on the treatment area two or three times a day. Gently smooth it onto your skin until it is absorbed. Do not apply just before your treatment.
- If you need to, ask your GP to prescribe a suitable skin moisturiser, otherwise discuss this with your treatment radiographers at the start of your radiotherapy. They may be able to give you a sample moisturiser to try.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing next to the skin (cotton is a good natural fibre)
- Avoid the use of sun lamps, spray tans or skin colouring lotions. Avoid using hot water bottles or ice packs in the treatment area.
- Avoid shaving in the area being treated (if you have to shave then use an electric razor for dry shaving only. When the skin becomes visibly red, stop shaving). No wet shaving, hair removal creams, lasers or wax should be used.
- You may continue to swim if your skin is not blistered or peeling, providing that you wash the treatment area before and afterwards and apply moisturiser. Care should be taken as chlorinated water can have a drying effect on the skin. Do not swim if you have an infection or your skin is irritated.
- If the skin becomes very sore or broken you will be seen by the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist or Tissue Viability Assistant Practitioner who can provide creams and dressings as required.

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Other early effects of treatment

- Tiredness. Most people will feel tired as a result of having radiotherapy. Tiredness will often come on slowly as the treatment progresses and may continue for some weeks after the treatment has finished.
If you feel tired you may need to sleep or rest. However, if you are feeling up to it, regular exercise such as taking a short walk can help with fatigue.
- Nausea (feeling sick). 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.

Late side effects

Late effects of radiotherapy can occur months to years after you have completed your treatment.

- 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.
- **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 small risk (1-2% per 10 years following treatment) of developing a second cancer due to radiotherapy.

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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 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

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within three weeks of completing treatment please telephone your consultant's secretary.

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.

If you have any problems before then, you can contact the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists** 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. 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 outside 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 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

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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.tfwm.org.uk>.**

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 / Ambulance

0845 2669662

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. If this is the case, you will be treated as soon as possible after you arrive.

Patient Information

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 make sure 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

The NHS Hospital Travel Cost Scheme allows 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. On the first day of treatment you will be given a written appointment schedule. Please check these dates and notify your treatment radiographers if you need to change any dates or times as soon as possible.
- Every effort will be made to give you times that you prefer, but with a heavy workload this cannot be guaranteed.
- 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.

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- There may be breaks in treatment due to public holidays and machine maintenance. 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.
- 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.

Complementary therapy- maybe unavailable due to COVID19 restrictions

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

Useful telephone numbers:

Arden Cancer Centre: 024 7696 7272

Mon – Fri 9.00am to 5.00pm

Radiotherapy Ward 35: 024 7696 5528

Ask to speak to the Nurse in Charge – 24 hours

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist: 024 7696 7290

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Monday – Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Radiotherapy Planning: 024 7696 7493

Information and Support

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.

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

Cancer Research UK: 0808 800 4040

www.cancerresearchuk.org

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 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

Patient Information

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 024 7696 4760.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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