

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 treatment area. Radiotherapy can also damage normal cells in the treatment area. This can cause some side effects.

We plan radiotherapy carefully to protect as much healthy tissue as possible and reduce these side effects. The tissues usually heal with side effects and symptoms improving over time.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called therapeutic radiographers. It is delivered on machines called linear accelerators.

Both male and female staff will treat you. We are a teaching hospital and have student radiographers on placement, 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/>



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What is stereotactic ablative radiotherapy, (SABR)?

SABR is a way of giving radiotherapy that allows us to give a higher dose of radiation to the tumour. This increases 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. Treatment time for SABR is much shorter than for standard radiotherapy because we give a higher dose of radiation each time. Patients will usually have 3 or 5 treatments compared with several weeks of treatment for standard radiotherapy, (although each session will be longer than for standard radiotherapy).

Consent forms

Before you have this procedure, you will need to sign a consent form. This indicates that:

- your doctor has explained the treatment procedure and any possible side effects to you;
- you agree to go ahead with treatment;
- you agree to your information being collected and used for audit purposes within the radiotherapy department.

Pacemakers

If you have a pacemaker, or implantable defibrillator, please tell your doctor and the radiographers before your first treatment. Treatment can alter the performance of your device. It may need testing before and after treatment is given.

Pregnancy

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

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

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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 the treatment area;
- calculation of how to deliver the correct dose of radiation to the treatment area.

CT Planning Scan

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.

For the CT scan and later treatments, you'll need to remove your clothing from the treatment area. Only the part of your body that will be treated will be uncovered. We'll make every effort to keep you covered where possible.

You will be positioned on the CT couch by the radiographers. This is the same position that you will be in for each of your radiotherapy treatments.

After the CT appointment there will be a gap of 3 to 4 weeks before your treatment starts. During this time doctors, physics staff and radiographers are preparing your treatment.

Skin Marks

At the CT scan, you'll have felt tip pen marks put onto your skin. These are used as reference for the planning process and during treatment. With your permission, we can put tiny permanent dots of dye beneath the skin, called tattoos. These will not wash off. If we cannot 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. This helps the radiographers, doctors and physics team to see organs more clearly on the CT scan. This

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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've had contrast before and had any reaction to it, please let your doctor or the radiographers know. Contrast is only needed for treatment planning and not for daily radiotherapy

Bowel and bladder preparation

You need to have an empty bladder and empty bowels for the CT scan and your daily radiotherapy.

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 information and support radiographer on 024 7696 7290.

Treatment

SABR is given in 3 or 5 treatments, usually on alternate days.

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. You will also need to prepare for your treatment in the same way as before, with an empty bladder and empty bowels.

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'll need to lie quite still but you can breathe normally.

During the treatment, the machine will move around you, but nothing will touch you. You will not feel anything during the treatment. The machine will make a buzzing noise.

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The treatment times are around 45 minutes. Images are taken before to check that the treatment is correct before it is given. The radiographers watch you all the time on a screen. They 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. This means that the 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 you are safe to be near children and pregnant women.

Side effects of treatment

Treatment is painless but it can cause some side effects. Treatment affects people in different ways. It's difficult to predict which side effects will affect you and how severe they will be.

The full benefit of the treatment is not usually reached until some weeks after the last treatment session.

Side effects can be early (acute term), and late (chronic):

Early or short-term side effects

These can happen during your treatment and for several weeks afterwards:

Tiredness

- Most people will feel tired because of radiotherapy treatment.
- Tiredness will often come on slowly as the treatment progresses. It may last for some weeks after the treatment has finished.

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- If you feel tired, try to rest as much as you can. Research has found that gentle exercise such as taking a short walk can help with tiredness.

Loss of appetite

Your appetite may vary during treatment. Depending on where you are being treated you may feel nauseous (feeling sick). 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

These are usually minimal for this type of treatment, but the following could happen:

Radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction like exposure to the sun in the treatment area.

Towards the end of treatment and the first 1 or 2 weeks after treatment, your skin may become red or itchy. It may help to apply a skin moisturiser to the treatment area.

Effects on the bladder

- An increase frequency of urination (peeing)
- Passing urine more often at night
- A burning sensation when passing urine.
- A feeling of needing to pass urine urgently but only passing a small amount.

We advise that you:

- Drink plenty of fluids, a minimum of 2 litres (4 pints) a day.
- Avoid drinks that can irritate the bladder such as tea, green tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, alcohol and acidic fruit juices. Caffeine free alternatives are better but should still be drunk in moderation.
- Drink plenty of water or squash.

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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 of needing a urinary catheter in this scenario. This involves passing a tube called a catheter into the bladder 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 happen months to years after you have completed your treatment. Your consultant will discuss with you any late effects that may be relevant to your treatment. These may include:

Damage to the bones

Radiotherapy can make your bones more fragile in areas that are treated, such as the ribs. This can lead to a loss of bone density called osteoporosis.

Second malignancy

There is a very small risk of developing a second cancer in the area treated area beyond in the years after the treatment.

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

Contact the Macmillan information and support radiographer on 024 7696 7290, or your clinical nurse specialist if:

- you develop new symptoms after your treatment is over;
- you are concerned that the immediate side effects are not getting better;
- You'd like more information.

After Treatment

The early side effects from the treatment will continue for several weeks after the treatment is complete.

You will receive an appointment to see your consultant 6 - 8 weeks after finishing treatment. At this appointment, any further treatments or investigations will be discussed with you.

If you haven't received an appointment within 3 weeks of completing treatment, please telephone radiotherapy reception on 024 7696 7272.

If you have any problems concerning your radiotherapy treatment, contact the Macmillan information and support radiographers 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 ask staff or visit the Hospital website for up-to-date maps and directions. www.uhcv.nhs.uk

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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

It can be very difficult to park at busy times, so please allow extra time. There are several visitor car parks across the site. There are also drop-off points near the Arden Centre and the main entrance. These allow 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.

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, make a note of it or take a photo of the number plate.

Please note that free parking does not include:

- clinic appointments
- counselling appointments

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Public transport

Many bus routes stop at the hospital. Buses drive onto the site and stop close to the main entrance. For more information about bus services, visit the Transport for West Midlands website: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/>

Hospital transport

Hospital transport is available for radiotherapy treatment, where there is a medical need. It is not available for your CT planning scan or blood tests. It is not available for social or financial reasons.

You may not be entitled to access hospital transport if you:

- receive Disability Living Allowance Mobility Component, or
- have a vehicle under the mobility scheme.

If you need hospital transport and think 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)

HTG-UK Leicestershire and Rutland

0345 241 3012

Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL

0843 2086888

Worcestershire Acute Trust Transport Service

0300 0110017

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

Patients will often have to wait at the Arden Centre to be taken home for some time. This is due to the demand on the hospital transport service. We advise that patients make their own travel arrangements where possible.

If you are relying on the hospital transport service, bring food, drinks and any medication you may need 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 may charge a mileage rate which varies. For more information, please ask to speak to the Macmillan information and support radiographers.

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 information for more information.

Prescriptions

All cancer patients are entitled to free prescriptions. If you need an exemption card, please ask a member of staff about how to apply.

Appointments

The department is usually open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. It's closed at weekends and on public holidays.

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You will be given a written appointment schedule on the first date of your treatment. Please check these dates. Notify your treatment radiographers as soon as possible if you need to change any dates or times. We'll try our best to give you the times you prefer, but this cannot be guaranteed.

If you are having chemotherapy alongside radiotherapy, we will try to manage appointments appropriately.

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

There may be breaks in treatment due to public holidays and machine maintenance. We may ask some patients to come in on these days for treatment. A different treatment machine could be used.

It is not advisable for you to miss any other appointments. If this is unavoidable, please talk to the radiographers treating you.

We need to have a contact telephone number for you. We may have to call patients about appointments or with other information at short notice. If your telephone is set to stop incoming calls from withheld numbers, please give us a different telephone number.

Counselling

A counselling service available at the Arden Centre. For more information speak to your specialist nurse, doctor or radiographer, or telephone 024 7696 7478.

Useful telephone numbers:

Lead SABR radiographer: 024 7696 7269

Macmillan information and support radiographers: 024 7696 7290

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Arden cancer centre reception: 024 7696 7272

Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm

Acute Oncology: (24-hour emergency advice)

024 7696 4105

Planning radiographers: 024 7696 7454

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. The Centre is located on the ground floor in the main entrance.

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

NHS advice 111

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

Cancer Research UK: 0300 123 1022

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.

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

Written by Alysha Forrest and Katie Roberts (Lead SABR radiographers), Julia Biggs & Alison Crichton (Macmillan information and support radiographers) 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, please contact 024 7696 7272 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



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