

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy information for patients undergoing total skin electron (TSE) treatment

### What is total skin electron treatment (TSE)?

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy radiation to kill cancer cells in the area being treated. Radiotherapy can also change normal cells in the treatment area. This can cause some side effects.

Electron treatment is a type of radiotherapy that will only treat the skin surface. Total skin electron treatment is used when the cancer has affected many areas of your skin. The electron treatment is given to the entire skin surface.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called therapeutic radiographers. It is delivered on machines called Linear Accelerators. Some additional skin treatments may be given on smaller machines.

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/>



## Patient Information

### Consent forms

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

- your doctor has explained the treatment procedure and any possible side effects to you and
- you agree to go ahead with treatment.

Some patients may be involved in a clinical trial that started in Birmingham and will need to complete additional consent forms for this.

### 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.

### Planning your treatment

A period of planning or preparation is required before your treatment can start. This means that you will need to come to the Radiotherapy department in the Arden Cancer Centre at University Hospital Coventry as an outpatient to have some measurements taken.

At this appointment you will be shown how to place yourself into the 6 treatment positions (see diagram on page 4).

### Treatment

Treatment will start 1 to 2 weeks after the planning appointment.

## Patient Information

Treatment will be given over 4 consecutive days – either Tuesday to Friday or Monday to Thursday, for a duration of 2, 4 or 5 weeks. This depends on the regimen chosen. Your doctor will have discussed the most appropriate length of treatment with you in clinic.

### **How do you prepare for treatment?**

You will need to undress for the treatment and will be provided with special underwear. You may bring a dressing gown or ask for a hospital gown to wear in the treatment room. However, it will need to be removed for the treatment.

**Please make sure that you remove all jewellery and piercings before your appointment.**

### **What happens during the treatment?**

During the treatment, you will need to stand and hold onto a bar. The radiographers will position you for the treatment in the positions shown on page 4.

You will need to hold each position for a few minutes and then change to the next.

Several small measuring devices may be taped to your skin from your head down to your feet to measure the radiation doses.

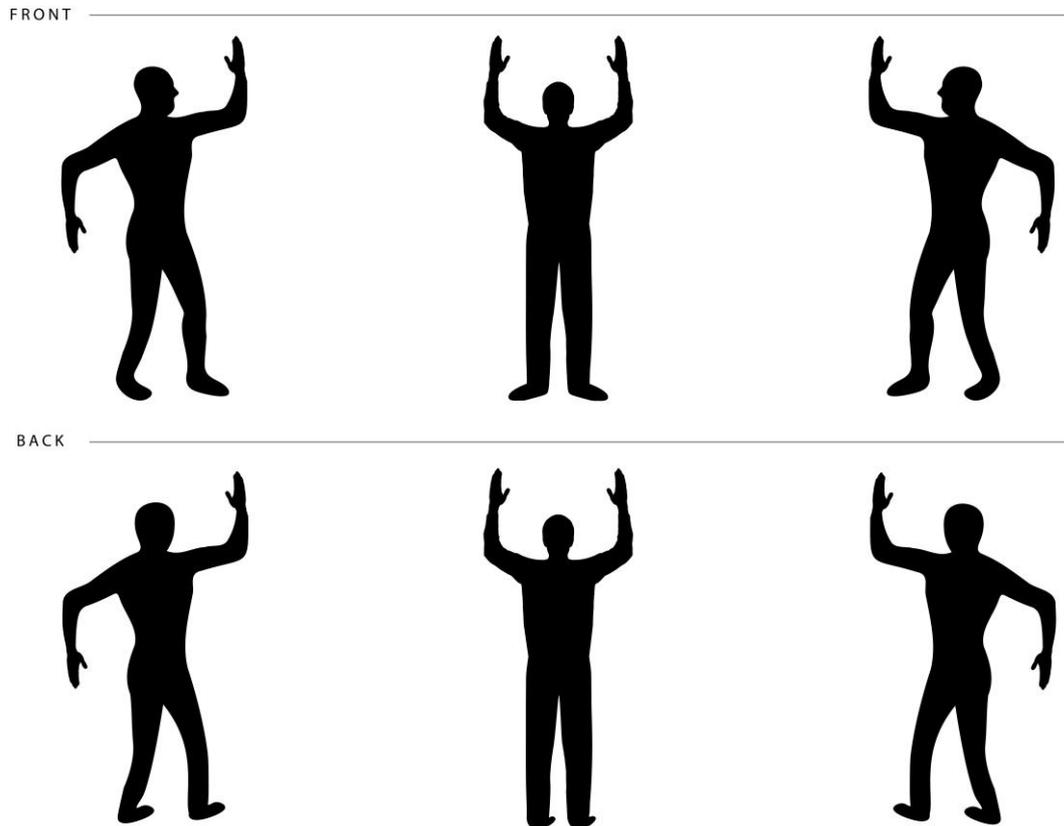
The total duration of the treatment each day will be between 45 to 60 minutes - a lot of this time is spent setting up the treatment. You will be alone in the treatment room for short periods while the machine is on. The radiographers will watch you all the time through a camera and will be able to hear you. You can bring a CD to listen to during the treatment if you wish.

You will be given goggles to wear over your eyes for every treatment. These goggles protect your eyes from the radiotherapy. They are heavy and dark. This means that you will not be able to see anything while you are wearing them.

## Patient Information

After the treatment is delivered, the machine is switched off. There is no radiation present, so you will not be radioactive and are safe to be around pregnant women and children.

### Six treatment positions



Images taken within the Trust

### Additional Treatment Areas

As you will be standing for your TSE treatment, it may be necessary to treat the soles of your feet separately. This will be done with conventional radiotherapy, taking about 45 minutes.

There may also be a need for a few small additional treatments with conventional radiotherapy to some areas during or occasionally after your main treatment, especially if lesions persist.

You may also receive some additional treatment to the area around your eyes. This will be discussed with you by your doctor. This treatment is

## Patient Information

given on a separate smaller machine and will involve having eye drops that numb the eyes. You will then have small pieces of lead inserted into the eye – similar to a contact lens. This is to shield the eye from the radiation.

After this eye treatment, you will need to wear an eye patch to protect the eye. This is because the eye will still be numb for a few hours afterwards. The treatment radiographers will give you some more advice during your appointment.

You will only ever have **one eye** treated per day, so you will still be able to see after your treatment. This additional treatment will be given during the same course as your main treatment, so you don't have to attend extra appointments.

## Early side effects of treatment

These early side effects may happen during your treatment and for a short while afterwards :

### Effects on the skin

You may experience the following effects on your skin:

- Soreness and reddening
- Itchiness and flaking
- Fissures (cracks in the skin)
- Increased sensitivity to the sun
- Infection

This treatment will affect the skin all over your body, but patients often find their hands and feet to be the most sore. It is important to continue to use the creams and dressings supplied by your doctor to moisturise your skin. Please check that these do not contain any metals such as zinc (Zn), silver (Ag) or aluminium (Al), and do not apply these immediately before treatment. Any dressings will have to be removed for your treatment but will then be reapplied immediately after.

## Patient Information

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

- Wash daily using your usual soap or shower gel
- Use a soft towel to pat your skin dry
- Avoid wearing tight clothes in the area being treated (cotton is a good natural fibre)
- Avoid any perfumes, aftershaves, make-up, hair dye or other creams
- Avoid the use of sun lamps, spray tans or skin colouring lotions
- Avoid using hot water bottles or ice packs
- Keep the treated area out of the sun during treatment and care should be taken in the future by using a high factor sun cream – factor 50
- Avoid shaving (if you have to shave, use an electric razor for dry shaving only - if your skin is visibly red, stop shaving). No wet shaving, hair removal creams, lasers or wax should be used.
- Avoid using sticky tape for dressings such as Elastoplast or Micropore
- Drink plenty of fluids

Tell the staff looking after you if you are concerned about any areas of your skin.

### **Hair loss**

Hair loss can occur in the treatment area, so you will lose the hair on your head and body hair. It will usually grow back 3 to 6 months after treatment has finished, but there is a risk of permanent hair loss.

### **Brittle nails**

- During treatment, your nails may be shielded for protection
- Nails may become brittle and split, so it's important to keep them trimmed
- Sometimes nails can fall out, but they will grow back a few months after treatment is completed
- Wearing thin cotton gloves will help to protect your nails and prevent them snagging on your clothes or scratching your skin

## Patient Information

### **Temperature regulation**

After total skin electron treatment, your sweat glands may not work properly and you may sweat less than before. This should only last a few months. However, you may need to drink more fluids, avoid strenuous exercise in hot weather and wear extra layers of clothing in cooler weather.

### **Tiredness**

You may feel tired toward the end of treatment and feel that you have little energy. This will get better but it can last for a number of weeks or months after treatment. The following suggestions may help:

- Rest when you need to
- Maintain a normal diet
- Ask family and friends for help
- Try light exercise, such as taking a walk
- Depression can make tiredness worse. If you are feeling low, please talk to a staff member or your GP.

If you would like more information, please ask for the Macmillan booklet 'Coping with Fatigue'.

### **Effects on the mouth**

During treatment and for a short time afterward, your mouth may become painful, sore, ulcerated and dry. You may also notice some changes in taste.

The following advice may help:

- Keep your mouth moist with regular sips of water.
- Keep your mouth clean and reduce the chances of infection by brushing teeth, gums and tongue using a small soft toothbrush (and toothpaste if tolerated) at least twice daily.
- Use a salt-water mouthwash at least 4 times a day to keep your mouth clean. Mix half a teaspoon of salt in a pint (568ml) of lukewarm pre-boiled water. Gargle or swill the salt-water mouthwash around your mouth and then spit it out.
- Do not use a commercial mouthwash as they may contain alcohol, which can dry and irritate your mouth.

## Patient Information

- You may be prescribed medication to help keep your mouth clean and prevent infections.
- Remove and clean your dentures after each meal. If your dentures are rubbing and causing soreness in your mouth, it would be better not to wear them until the treatment has finished.
- If your lips become sore - an unscented, non-metallic lip balm may help.

### **Other possible early side effects**

- Nose bleeds
- Dry eyes
- Stiffness in hands and feet
- Swelling in ankles and feet

### **Late effects**

These side effects may appear months or years after treatment:

- Excess pigmentation in the skin
- Small, scattered, dilated blood vessels on the skin
- Chronic dry skin
- Decreased sweating
- Partial or complete loss of scalp and body hair
- Increased risk of developing skin cancers

Radiotherapy is recommended as part of your treatment to give you the best chance of control over your disease. However, there is a small increased risk of developing other skin cancers later in life for people who have had radiation treatment, compared with the average population.

### **After treatment**

Side effects from the treatment may continue for several weeks after the course is completed. Your consultant at the Arden Cancer Centre will review your treatment 4 to 6 weeks after treatment. In some cases, “boost” treatments may be recommended for difficult to treat areas, such as groins and armpits. After this review, you may be referred back to your local oncologist or dermatologist for ongoing care.

## Patient Information

If you have any problems with your radiotherapy treatment, contact the Macmillan information and support radiographer 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 University Hospital website 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

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:

## Patient Information

- Clinic appointments
- Counselling appointments

## 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 Midland website: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/>

## Hospital Transport

Hospital transport is available for radiotherapy treatment, where there is a medical need. It may not be 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 Ambulance Service**

0345 2413012

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

0300 011 0017

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

## Patient Information

cannot be 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 available to buy snacks and drinks which is open from 10am - 4pm.

## Transport Schemes

Volunteer transport schemes are 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.

## Treatment as an in-patient

In rare circumstances, if travelling long distances from home or for cases of medical need, patients can be admitted to our oncology ward for the duration of treatment. However, this is only offered on an individual case by case basis.

## 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.

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.

## Patient Information

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

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

The radiographers arrange treatment appointment times. You will be given a list of appointments on your first day of treatment. Every effort will be made to give you times that you prefer. However, due to a heavy workload this cannot be guaranteed.

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

## Useful telephone numbers

**Arden cancer centre reception:** 024 7696 7272

Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm

**Acute Oncology** (24-hour emergency advice) 024 7696 4105

**Oncology Ward 35:** 024 7696 5525 or 024 7696 5528 or 024 7696 5531  
(for inpatients relatives)

**Macmillan information and support radiographers:** 024 7696 7290

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

## Patient Information

**Radiotherapy planning team:** 024 7696 7493

Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5.00pm

**NHS advice** - use the 111 service

**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

**Macmillan Cancer Support:** 0808 808 00 00

Lines are open Monday – Friday, 8am – 9pm

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

### **You may find these booklets useful:**

Understanding Radiotherapy

Factsheet Understanding Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma

Coping with Fatigue

### **Other useful information:**

#### **Lymphoma Action**

0808 808 5555

[www.lymphoma-action.org.uk](http://www.lymphoma-action.org.uk)

#### **Cutaneous Lymphoma Foundation**

[www.clfoundation.org](http://www.clfoundation.org)

[info@clfoundation.org](mailto:info@clfoundation.org)

#### **Cancer Research UK:**

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

## Patient Information

### 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. This is so they can be dealt with quickly and efficiently, in line with University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust complaints policy.

Written by Julia Biggs & Michelle Evans (Macmillan information and support radiographers).

With help and advice from the medical staff of the Arden Cancer Centre, University Hospitals Coventry and 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 7290 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

This Trust operates a smoke free policy. Help to stop smoking can be obtained from your local NHS Stop Smoking Service: 0300 123 1044 or the hospital's stop smoking service 024 7696 4760.

#### 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.uhcv.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcv.nhs.uk/feedback)



#### Document History

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