

## 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 damage normal cells in the treatment area which 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 on machines called Linear Accelerators, although some additional superficial 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 in radiotherapy who are supervised by trained staff.



## Patient Information

### Consent forms

Before you undergo this procedure, you will be required to sign a consent form. This form 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.

### Pacemakers

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

### Pregnancy

If you are pregnant 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 may be a risk to an unborn baby from this type of radiotherapy.

### Planning your treatment

Before treatment can start, you will need to come to the Radiotherapy Department in the Arden Cancer Centre at University Hospital Coventry as an outpatient to have your treatment planned. This session allows us to take lots of measurements to plan your treatment carefully.

You may have an opportunity to see the treatment machine, and you will be able to ask questions.

Your treatment will then be planned according to your needs. You will be shown how to place yourself into the 6 treatment positions.

### Treatment

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

Treatment will be given on 4 consecutive days - Tuesday to Friday, or Monday to Thursday, for 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.

## Patient Information

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

You will need to undress for treatment, and you will be given special underwear to wear. You might like to bring a dressing gown or to ask for a hospital gown to wear in the treatment room. However, this will have to be removed for the treatment.

**You must remove all jewellery and piercings.**

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

You will need to stand for the treatment, holding on to 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 onto your skin from your head down to your feet during treatment to measure the radiation doses.

The total treatment each day will last for 45 to 60 minutes - a lot of this time is spent setting up the treatment. You will be in the treatment room by yourself for short periods of time whilst the electrons are switched on. The radiographers will watch you all the time on closed circuit television and will be able to hear you. You can bring a tape or CD with you to listen to in the room.

You will be given goggles to wear over your eyes for every treatment. The 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.

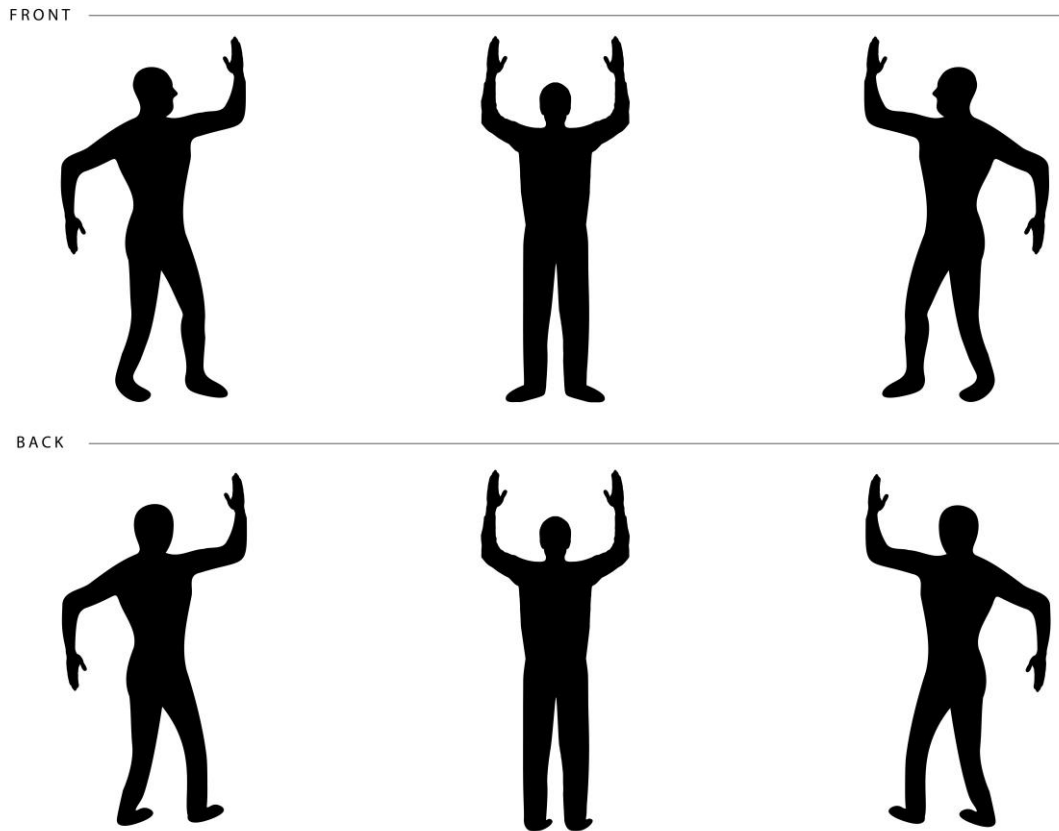
As you will be standing for your main TSE treatment, it may be necessary to treat the soles of your feet separately. This will be done with conventional radiotherapy, taking only 10 minutes.

It may also be necessary to give a few small additional treatments with conventional radiotherapy to some areas during your main treatment, and occasionally afterwards, if lesions persist.

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

## Patient Information

### Six treatment positions



### Early side effects of treatment

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

#### Effects on the skin

- soreness and reddening of the skin
- itchy and flaking skin
- fissures (cracks in the skin)
- sun sensitivity
- 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 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

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treatment. Any dressings will have to be removed for your treatment but will then be reapplied immediately after.

We advise that you:

- Wash daily with your usual soap or shower gel and pat your skin dry with a soft towel.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing next to the skin (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 the treatment your nails may be shielded to protect them
- They may become brittle and split - keep them trimmed
- Sometimes nails can fall out, but they will grow back a few months after treatment has finished
- Wearing thin cotton gloves will help to protect your nails and prevent them snagging on your clothes or scratching your skin

### **Temperature regulation**

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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.

### **Fatigue**

You may feel tired towards 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 suggestions below may help;

- Rest if you need to
- Eat normally
- Ask family and friends to help
- Try some light exercise such as taking a walk
- Depression can make fatigue worse; if you are feeling low please talk to a member of staff or your GP

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

### **Effects on the mouth**

During and for a short while after your treatment, your mouth is likely to become painful, sore, ulcerated, and dry. You may also experience some changes in taste.

We advise you to:

- 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 out.
- Do not use a commercial mouthwash - they may contain alcohol which will dry and irritate your mouth.
- You may be prescribed medication to keep your mouth clean and help prevent infections.

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- 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.
- Your lips can also become sore - an unfragranced, 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 effects may occur months or years after treatment:

- Excess pigmentation in the skin
- Scattered small, dilated blood vessels on the skin
- Chronic dry skin
- Decreased sweating
- There may also be partial or complete scalp hair loss in some cases and bodily hair
- Risk of 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 treatment will continue for several weeks after the treatment course has been completed. Your consultant at the Arden Cancer Centre will review your treatment 4 to 6 weeks after it is completed, and may suggest “boost” treatments for areas that are difficult to treat such as groins and armpits. You may then be referred back to your local oncologist or dermatologist.

## Patient Information

If you need any help or advice telephone:

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](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. Please allow for extra time to park. 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.

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. Payment 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 or counselling appointments – parking for these appointments must be paid for.**



## Patient Information

### 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 travel line 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

#### **Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL**

0843 2086888

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

0300 011 0017

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 to 4pm.

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### **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 enables people in receipt of certain benefits or those 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.

### **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 haven't already got an exemption card, please ask a member of staff for an application form.

### **Appointments**

The department is usually open from 9am to 5pm 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.

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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. However, due to 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.

## 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.

## Useful information and telephone numbers:

**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 answer phone facility is available.

Open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm, the Centre is located in the main entrance.

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

Macmillan national helpline: 0808 808 0000

Lines are open Monday – Friday, 8.00 am – 9.00 pm

You may find these booklets useful:

Understanding Radiotherapy

Factsheet Understanding Cutaneous TCell Lymphoma

Coping with Fatigue

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### **Useful telephone numbers:**

**Arden Cancer Centre** – Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm 024 7696 7272

**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

### **Lymphoma Action**

0808 808 5555

[www.lymphomas.org.uk](http://www.lymphomas.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 satisfaction**

We hope that you have found this booklet helpful. We welcome your comments on the care and service that you have received within the Arden Cancer Centre.

We ask that specific complaints be directed to a member of staff so that they can be dealt with, quickly and efficiently, in line with the Hospital's complaints policy.

## Patient Information

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**.

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 7250 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy. For help with stopping smoking, contact the hospital's stop smoking service on 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.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback)



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