

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Treatment to the Prostate

### Introduction

As part of your treatment plan your doctor has recommended radiotherapy treatment to the prostate gland, for some patients the pelvic lymph nodes and seminal vesicles may also be included. The aim of this booklet is to provide you with information about the Arden Centre and about radiotherapy including the possible side effects of your treatment.

Please read this information and ask any questions that you may have. Contact numbers are provided at the end of this booklet.

### What is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy radiation, usually x-rays, to kill cancer cells in the area being treated. Radiotherapy can affect both cancer cells and normal cells in the treatment area. Normal cells can usually repair themselves, whereas cancer cells are not able to. The effects on normal cells results in some side effects, but radiotherapy is planned very carefully to avoid treating as much healthy tissue as possible in order to reduce these side effects.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called Therapy 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.

### Consent forms

Before you undergo 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.



## Patient Information

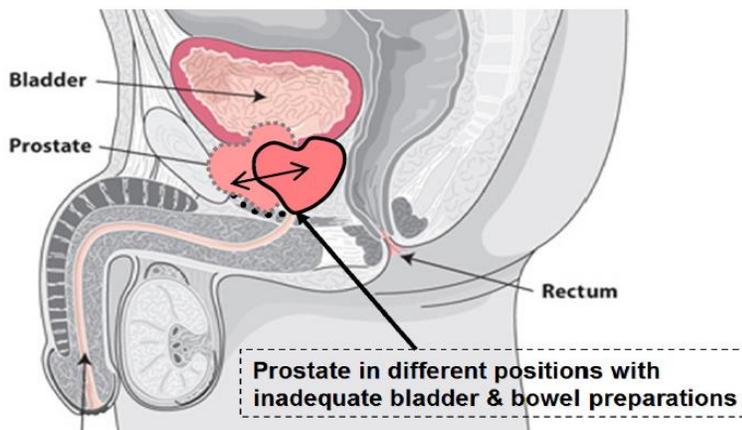
### Pacemakers

**If you have a pacemaker please mention this to both your doctor and also the radiographers, before your first treatment.**

### Bowel and bladder preparation for prostate radiotherapy patients

Your doctor has requested a CT planning scan of your pelvis to plan your course of radiotherapy treatment. This will show areas we need to treat and those we need to avoid. You will be required to pull your trousers and underwear down so that the radiographers can see your pelvis but you will not need to remove any clothing.

Your prostate can move about on a daily basis depending on how full your bladder and bowels (rectum) are. To minimise this movement, in order to provide you with the most accurate treatment, you will need to have an **empty** rectum and a comfortably **full** bladder for your CT planning scan and for all your radiotherapy treatment appointments.



Keeping the prostate in a similar position everyday by having an empty rectum and a comfortably full bladder improves the accuracy in treating the prostate and reduces side effects to the bladder and rectum. In most cases we are able to check the position of the prostate, how empty the rectum is and how full the bladder using a CT scanner built into the treatment machine.

If the bladder isn't full or the rectum isn't empty, or if there is excess gas/wind in the bowel, it may make treatment planning and the treatment itself more difficult. It may mean that we have to repeat your CT planning scan. Once you start treatment it may mean that you are asked to get off the treatment couch before having treatment to fill the bladder or empty the bowel sufficiently to ensure that the prostate is in the correct position for treatment.

## Patient Information

### **Full Bladder Preparation**

- You should have a comfortably full bladder for your CT planning scan and every treatment.
- To avoid becoming dehydrated it is important that you drink 2-3 litres of fluid throughout the day starting in the week before your CT planning scan and daily throughout treatment.
- Check the notice board in the waiting room on arrival for any delays on your treatment machine.
- 1 hour before your appointment empty your bladder and drink 300ml of water (approximately 2 plastic cups) straight away.
- Do not urinate until your treatment appointment is completed.

### **Empty Rectum Preparation**

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

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

- Drink 2 -3 litres of fluid a day and eat well
- Monitor foods and drinks that give you wind

Before your CT planning scan and throughout treatment:

- Reduce green leafy vegetables to minimise wind
- Avoid food or drink which you have noticed gives you wind
- If you normally take laxatives then continue
- If you aren't opening your bowels daily try a stimulant laxative e.g. Sennakot.

### **Enemas**

**Your doctor or radiographer may recommend micro-enemas.**

- A micro-enema is a small enema inserted into the rectum.
- The enema should be used about 1- 2 hours before your planning CT scan or radiotherapy appointment. The enema is usually effective within 30 minutes.
- You may be given a prescription by your consultant or radiographer before you attend for CT planning or a prescription will be given to you if you attend the pre-treatment information and advice session (see next page).

## Patient Information

- Use the enemas daily for 2 days before your CT planning scan and on the day of your CT planning scan, and then daily for 2 days before the start of your radiotherapy and throughout your treatment, stop if your bowels become loose.
- If your bowels are already loose or you have a pre-existing bowel condition please ring the number below to discuss this.

## 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.
- A dietary advice sheet is available for patients having problems with wind, constipation or diarrhoea.
- Peppermint capsules or Windeze tablets may help to reduce wind.

For further information please contact the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist 024 7696 7290.

## Pre-Treatment Information and Advice Sessions

Once a month the radiographers hold a pre-treatment information and advice session for prostate patients who will be having radiotherapy. Advice is given on bladder and bowel preparation and information about radiotherapy including a virtual demonstration. Patients are encouraged to attend either alone or with a friend or relative before their CT planning scan. Micro-enemas will be ready for collection from pharmacy after the session. To book into a session please ring the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist on 024 7696 7290.

Any patients who aren't able to attend will receive a telephone call where possible to discuss bladder and bowel preparation and will be advised to get a suitable laxative or micro-enema from their pharmacist or GP, if a prescription was not given by their consultant.

## 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 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.

## Patient Information

### **Skin marks**

When your treatment is planned you will have marks put onto your skin. These marks correspond to the area that will be treated. In most cases, with your permission, we can put tiny permanent dots of dye just beneath the skin, which will not wash off, called a tattoo. If we are unable to do this you will need to keep felt tip pen marks on your skin for all of your treatment.

### **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 essential 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.

The radiographers will line you up with the machine by dimming the room lights and using laser lights and a bright light from the machine. The machine may move around you during this process but in most cases will not touch you.

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. You will not feel anything during the treatment but the machine will make a buzzing noise. The machine may rotate around you, stop for a short period, then rotate again. The radiographers will be watching you throughout on closed circuit television cameras and can hear you on an intercom. They can switch the machine off and enter the room if you move or call them.

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.

### **Hormones**

Many patients receive treatment (usually injections) to lower levels of testosterone. A course of treatment is typically over 6 months or 3 years, your doctor will have discussed this with you. We usually allow 3 months of hormone treatment before radiotherapy starts.

## Patient Information

### **Side effects of radiotherapy**

When treating cancers with radiotherapy it is necessary to treat a small amount of healthy tissue. For this reason, radiotherapy can have some unwanted side effects which are listed below. Your doctor will have discussed these side effects with you when you were given the consent form to sign.

Research is going on all the time to make the treatment as effective as possible and to reduce the risk of these side effects. 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 – this is often worse during the 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 a day;
- Avoid drinks that can irritate the bladder such as tea, green tea, coffee, alcohol and acidic fruit juices. Caffeine free alternatives to tea and coffee 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;

## Patient Information

- 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.

### **Effects on the skin**

These are usually minimal for this type of treatment. However the following reactions 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 in the area treated.

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

- Bathe/shower daily using your usual soap or shower gel
- Don't have the water too hot or soak for too long;
- Use a soft towel to pat yourself dry;
- Avoid wearing tight clothes in the area being treated;
- **Do not** use sun beds;
- **Do not** swim if your skin is visibly red;
- Use a moisturising cream to soothe and moisturise the skin;
- Avoid extremes of temperature – hot or cold.

### **Other effects of treatment**

- Tiredness. If you feel tired try to rest as much as you can. Research has found that gentle exercise such as a short daily walk may help the symptoms of tiredness and fatigue.
- Hair loss can occur in the treatment area, so you may lose some pubic hair. It will grow back but may be thinner.
- The treatment does **not** make you radioactive.

## Patient Information

### Late effects

Late effects of radiotherapy can occur from months to years after you have completed your treatment. Modern machines and techniques have reduced some of these late effects.

- Bladder changes – can include a need to pass urine more frequently and a reduced bladder capacity and occasionally blood in the urine. There is a very small (1%) chance of incontinence.
- Bowel changes – bleeding from the bowel can occur in 5-10% of patients following radiotherapy. This can happen up to 6 months after completion of radiotherapy and usually settles without treatment. Some people feel the need to open their bowels more frequently than before radiotherapy and occasionally with some urgency.
- Impotence or change in sexual experience – radiotherapy can cause this in 30-50% of men occurring up to 2– 5 years after treatment.
- Dry ejaculation – after radiotherapy you may notice that only a small amount or no semen is produced.
- Fertility - radiotherapy is likely to result in infertility
- There is a very small risk of second cancers developing in the area treated and this occurs 25-30 years after treatment
- Very rarely, and only in lymph node positive disease where larger treatment fields are used, there is a risk of pelvic insufficiency fractures and lymphoedema.

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 reviews

At some point during your treatment you will 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.

## Patient Information

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 pictures of the treatment area during your radiotherapy, they are to check the position of the treatment.
- 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 the treatment have finished.

## After treatment

The 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 2-3 months later, if you haven't received this within 3 weeks of completing treatment please ring your consultant's secretary.

If you have any problems before this you can contact the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists** on **024 7696 7290**.

## Where is the Arden Centre?

The Arden Centre is situated in the west wing of University Hospital Coventry. 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 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 and can be made using cash, card or contactless.

## Patient Information

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 call the traveline 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)

## Thames Ambulance Service – patients with a Leicester GP

0345 241 3012

## Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL

0843 2086888

## Worcestershire Acute Trust Transport Service

0121 3079116 (for bookings)

01926 310311 (for queries on day of travel)

## Patient Information

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-4pm.

## 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 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

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.

The radiographers arrange treatment appointment times. Every effort will be made to give you times that you prefer, but with a heavy workload this cannot be guaranteed.

## Patient Information

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

Aromatherapy, reiki, massage, reflexology and yoga are available to oncology patients. Therapists are volunteers and provide their services to patients free of charge. Due to high demand these sessions are limited to two per patient.

Complementary therapies are by appointment only, please ask a member of staff, or telephone 024 7696 7290 (24 hour answer phone)

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

## Further information

**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 of the main hospital by the entrance.

## Useful telephone numbers and websites

**Arden Cancer Centre** – Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

For queries concerning appointments, parking and ambulance transport.

**Radiotherapy reception:** 024 7696 7272

## Patient Information

**Oncology Ward 35:** 024 7696 5525 or 024 7696 5528 or 024 7696 5531  
(24 hour emergency advice only please).

**Cancer and Radiotherapy Information and Advice:** 024 7696 7290

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

**NHS advice** – use the 111 service

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

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

**The Prostate Cancer Charity**

Tel: 0800 074 8383

[www.prostate-cancer.org.uk](http://www.prostate-cancer.org.uk)

## 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 University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust complaints policy.

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 9.30am to 4.30pm and speak to the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist**.

## Patient Information

This leaflet was 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 and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Clifford Bridge Road, 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.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy. For help to stop smoking call the National smoke free Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or contact the hospital's stop smoking service 02476 964760.

### Document History

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