

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

We plan radiotherapy very 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/>



## 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### Chemotherapy

Your doctor may also prescribe chemotherapy to be given during your course of radiotherapy. You will receive specific written information and give your consent separately for this. You may need to have weekly blood tests when on chemotherapy and radiotherapy together.

### What is treatment planning?

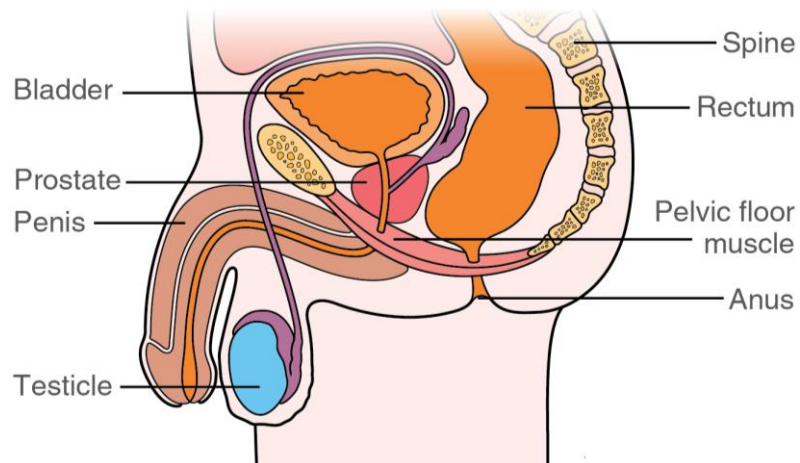
A period of planning or preparation is required before your treatment can start. This is to allow:

- accurate “aiming” of the radiotherapy at the treatment area
- calculation of how to deliver the correct dose of radiation to the treatment area

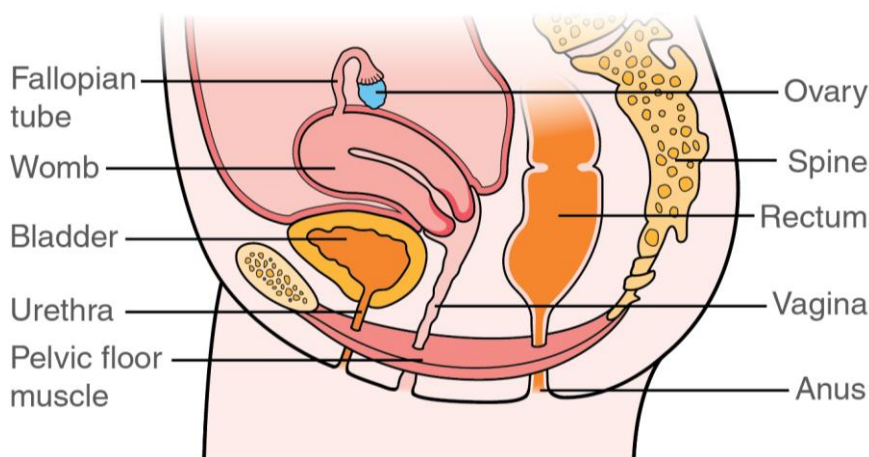
## Patient Information

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

### Male Pelvis



### Female Pelvis



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

## 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 over your pelvis. We will make every effort to keep you covered where possible. Gowns are available if you need one.

You will be positioned on the CT couch by the radiographers. You will lie on your back with sponges under your head, knees and feet for support.

## Patient Information

This is the same position that you will be in everyday for 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 will have felt tip pen marks put on to your skin. These are used as a 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 an intravenous contrast medium is used. This helps the radiographers, doctors and physics team to see organs more clearly on the CT scan. This will involve putting a needle into your arm during the CT scan. 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 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.

To reduce this, it is helpful if you have an **empty bladder and an empty rectum** for each appointment. 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.

## Empty bladder preparation

- **Do not drink for an hour before your appointment.**
- Empty your bladder immediately before you are called in for your planning scan and daily before your radiotherapy treatments.

### **Empty Rectum Preparation:**

- If you normally open your bowels fully every morning you don't need to do anything extra.
- If you normally take laxatives 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 try a stimulant laxative such as Senna, starting 2-3 days before your CT scan.
- When treatment is due to start, use the laxatives 2 days before the start of your radiotherapy and during your treatment. Stop if your bowels become loose or your treatment radiographers advise you to.

### **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, do not skip meals as this can cause more wind.

### **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

## Patient Information

Advice is available for patients having problems with wind, constipation or diarrhoea. Please telephone the Macmillan radiotherapy specialist on 024 7696 7290.

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

You will need to have an empty bladder and bowel for each treatment in the same way you did for your CT planning scan.

Radiographers will deliver the treatment as prescribed by your consultant. You will need to remove the clothing from the treatment area. You will then lie in the same position you were in when you had your CT planning scan.

The radiographers will dim the room 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 need to lie quite still but can breathe normally.

During 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.

The treatment times are very short. 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. Most people will be in the treatment room for about 15 – 20 minutes.

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.

## Patient Information

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.

### **What are the side effects of Radiotherapy?**

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.

Side effects can be early (acute) and late (chronic).

### **Early or short-term side effects**

These happen during your treatment and for several weeks afterwards:

#### **Effects on the bladder**

- An increased frequency of urination (peeing)
- Passing urine more often at night
- A burning sensation when passing urine
- Not able to hold your urine for as long as usual (urgency or in some cases incontinence)
- Passing small amounts of urine
- Passing debris and blood

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

- Drink plenty of fluids, aim for 2 litres (4 pints) a day
- Avoid drinks that can irritate the bladder such as tea, green tea, coffee, alcohol, cola, fruit juices, fizzy drinks and drinks with artificial sweeteners.
- Drink plenty of water or squash, herb/ fruit tea or caffeine-free drinks.

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.**

## Patient Information

### Effects on the bowel

- A bloated and tender feeling in your tummy/cramping
- An increase in the number of bowel movements
- Passing a lot of wind
- Loose stools, urgency and diarrhoea
- Mucous or blood in your poo

### We advise that you:

- Eat a normal well-balanced diet
- Avoid foods that cause wind
- If your bowels are loose, we may advise you to change your diet
- If you are taking laxatives, we may advise you to stop
- If necessary, we will advise you on medication to help control diarrhoea
- 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 but the following could occur:

- Radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction like exposure to the sun in the treatment area.
- 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
- Use a soft towel to pat your skin dry.
- Apply your usual moisturiser to the skin in the treatment area 2 or 3 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 or discuss this with your treatment radiographers at the start of your



## Patient Information

radiotherapy. They may be able to give you a sample moisturiser to try.

- Avoid wearing tight clothes in the area being treated (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 must shave, 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.

## Swimming

You may continue to swim if your skin is not blistered or peeling. You must wash the treatment area before and afterwards and apply moisturiser. Be aware that chlorinated water can have a drying effect on the skin. Do not swim if you have an infection or your skin is irritated.

You may not be able to swim if you are on chemotherapy due to the risk of infection. Please check with your specialist nurse.

## Other early effects of treatment

### Tiredness

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

### Nausea (feeling sick)

Let the radiographers know if this is a problem. It is possible to get a prescription for anti-sickness tablets. Eating light meals and drinking plenty of fluids can help.

## Patient Information

### **Hair loss**

You will only lose hair in the treatment area, so you may lose some pubic hair. It will grow back but may be thinner.

### **Late or long-term side effects**

Late side effects can happen months to years after you have completed your treatment.

### **Bladder changes**

This can include a need to pass urine more frequently and urgently, reduced bladder capacity, leakage or incontinence and occasionally blood in the urine.

### **Bowel changes**

This can include diarrhoea, urgency to poo or unable to control when you poo (incontinence). Rarely, there can be narrowing or bleeding from the bowel.

### **Changes to sexual function and fertility:**

**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.

**Impotence** - men can experience impotence after radiotherapy treatment to the pelvis, occurring up to 2-5 years after treatment.

**Vaginal narrowing**- women can experience a narrowing and shortening of the vagina. You will be advised to use a vaginal dilator 2 or 3 times a week for up to a year or longer after treatment. This will help to maintain the opening of the vagina, which can make future clinical examinations and intercourse more comfortable for you.

Radiotherapy may also cause some vaginal dryness. A lubricating gel may be recommended or prescribed to help.

## Patient Information

### **Bone pain**

There is a small risk of radiotherapy affecting the bones of the pelvis causing them to become weak. Sometimes, tiny cracks can appear in the pelvic bones some years after treatment. They are called pelvic insufficiency fractures.

### **Second malignancy**

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

### **Changes in bone density**

This can happen in women as a result of a premature menopause following treatment. Weight bearing exercise and a calcium enriched diet can help to avoid this. It may be necessary to have a bone density scan.

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

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**

You may be booked in for a 'treatment review' at some point during your treatment. This review can be with either a review radiographer or a doctor. At this review, we will discuss:

- any side effects that you may be experiencing as a result of your treatment
- any side effects that may happen as the treatment continues.

## Patient Information

At these reviews it is not usually possible to give you any information on how well the treatment is working. There are 2 reasons for this:

- Although we take pictures of the treatment area during your radiotherapy, these are to check the position of the treatment field. They are not detailed enough to show us how well the treatment is working.
- 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 has finished.

## 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 after finishing treatment. At this appointment your doctor will assess how well you are recovering from treatment. This may be face to face or by phone, so check your letter carefully.

Your urology surgeon will usually be asked to look inside the bladder about 3 months after the end of treatment to see how effective it has been.

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 Hospital website 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.

## Patient Information

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

## 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.

## Patient Information

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 0110017

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 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.

## **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.

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.

## Patient Information

### **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 to 5pm

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

**Macmillan radiotherapy specialist:** 024 7696 7290

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

**Radiotherapy Planning team:** 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. The Centre is located on the ground floor in the main entrance.

Open Monday to Friday 9m to 4pm

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

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

**Cancer Research UK:** 0808 800 4040

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://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. 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 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 & 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 on the hospital site. Please respect other patients and staff and refrain from smoking whilst visiting the hospital. Thank you.

Help to stop smoking can be obtained from your local NHS stop smoking free Helpline on 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.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback)



#### Document History

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