

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy information for patients undergoing treatment to the prostate or prostate bed

### What is radiotherapy?

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 which can cause some side effects. However, radiotherapy is planned very carefully to protect as much healthy tissue as possible in order to reduce these side effects. The tissues usually heal, with an improvement in side effects and symptoms over time.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called therapeutic 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.

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/>

### Consent forms

Before you have 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 and that you agree to go ahead with treatment.



## Patient Information

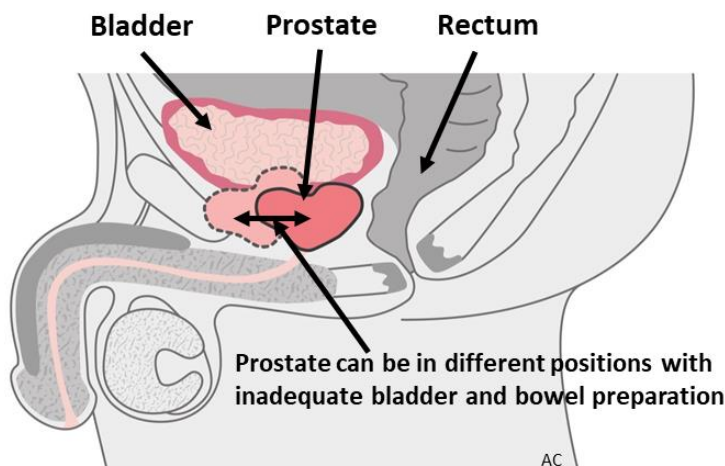
### Pacemakers

**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 it may need testing before and after treatment.

### Bowel and bladder preparation

Your prostate can move about daily depending on how full your bladder and bowels (rectum) are. To minimise this movement and 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. 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 is not sufficiently full or the rectum is not completely empty, or if there is excess gas/wind in the bowel, it may make treatment planning and the treatment itself more difficult.

## Patient Information

This may mean that we are not able to complete your CT planning scan and you have to come back for another appointment. 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 make sure that the prostate is in the correct position for treatment.

**In order to achieve a comfortably full bladder and an empty rectum for your CT planning scan we advise the following:-**

**Every day for 2 weeks before your CT planning scan:**

- Make sure you are drinking 2-3 litres (4 to 6 pints) of fluid a day and eat a well-balanced diet.
- If you have excess wind in the bowel this will show on your CT planning scan and treatment scans – therefore MONITOR food and drinks that give you wind but don't reduce them just yet.

**3-4 days before your scan:**

- If you normally take laxatives then continue to do so.
- If your bowels do not open daily, or tend to be open later in the day, try a laxative (you can discuss this with your pharmacist or GP or call the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist on the number below).

**2 days before your CT planning scan and during treatment:**

- If you have been prescribed micro-enemas start using 1 enema per day.
- Reduce green leafy vegetables and fizzy drinks to minimise wind.
- Avoid any other food or drink which you have noticed gives you wind, but do not cut out fibre entirely.
- It is important to eat regularly and not skip meals.
- Continue to drink 2-3 Litres of fluid daily.

## Patient Information

### **On the day of your scan and for each treatment:**

- Open your bowels if you are able.
- Eat breakfast and if your appointment is in the afternoon also have a light lunch. Not eating in order to achieve an empty bowel will cause more wind.
- If you have been prescribed micro-enemas use 1 enema 1-2 hours before your scan and treatment.
- 1 hour before your appointment time empty your bladder and then drink 300mls of water (1/2 pint) straight away. Try not to empty your bladder again until your appointment is completed.

### **Arriving at the Arden Centre**

- If you need to empty your bladder before your scan, have another drink to refill and note the time.
- If you feel that you could pass some wind or open your bowels try to do this before your scan, if you have emptied your bladder at the same time have another drink to refill.

Further advice is available for patients having problems with wind, constipation or diarrhoea.

You should receive a telephone call to discuss bladder and bowel preparation further. If you have not received this a week before your CT planning scan date, please contact the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist Radiographer: 024 7696 7290.

### **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 and then a gap of three to four weeks before your treatment starts, during which time doctors, physics staff and radiographers are planning your treatment.

## Patient Information

For the CT scan and subsequent treatment you will be required to lower your trousers and underwear a little so that the radiographers can see your pelvis but you will not need to remove any clothing. You will be carefully positioned on the CT couch by the radiographers, lying on your back with sponges under your head, knees and feet for support. This is the same position that you will be in everyday for your radiotherapy treatment.

You will need to have a full bladder and an empty bowel, following the instructions above, for the CT planning scan and throughout your radiotherapy treatment.

### Skin marks

At the scan felt tip pen marks will be put onto your skin; these marks are used as reference for the planning process and during treatment. After the scan, with your permission, the radiographers will put small permanent dots of dye just beneath the skin, which will not wash off, called tattoos. If we are unable to do this you will need to keep the felt tip pen marks on your skin for all of your treatment.

### Contrast

Sometimes an intravenous contrast medium is used to help the radiographers, doctors and physics team to see organs more clearly on the CT scan. This will involve having a needle put into your arm which will be removed after the CT scan. 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.

### Treatment

Radiographers will deliver the treatment as prescribed by your consultant. To do this you will need to fill your bladder and empty your bowels in the same way you did for your CT scan. The radiographers will ask you to lower your trousers and underwear down a little as before and you will be positioned on the treatment couch in the same way as when your treatment was planned.

## Patient Information

The radiographers will dim the room lights and use laser lights to line up your tattoos. 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. The treatment machine may move around you during treatment but nothing will touch you.

You will not feel anything during the treatment, but the machine will make a buzzing noise.

Treatment times are very short, images are taken beforehand to check that the treatment is correct before it is given. The radiographers watch you throughout on a monitor and will turn the machine off and enter the room if you move or call for assistance. Most people will be in the treatment room for about 15-20mins.

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.

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.

## Hormones

Many patients receive hormone ablative treatment (usually injections) to lower their levels of testosterone. A course of treatment can be for 6 months or up to 3 years, which your doctor will have discussed with you. We usually allow 3 months of hormone ablative treatment before radiotherapy starts. Your doctor may consider starting you on medication to protect your general bone health, as this can be affected by the hormone ablative treatment.

## Side effects of radiotherapy

Treatment is painless but can cause some side effects. It is unlikely that you will experience all of the side effects listed below, treatment affects people in different ways, and it can be difficult to predict which side effects will affect you and how severe they will be.

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

## Patient Information

### **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
- Some hesitancy when starting to urinate
- A feeling of needing to pass urine urgently but only passing a small amount
- A slower flow of urine

#### **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 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.

## Patient Information

### **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 happen:

- 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. For some people this can continue for several months after treatment.
- Hair loss can occur in the treatment area, so you may lose some pubic hair. It will grow back but may be thinner.



## Patient Information

### Late effects

Late effects of radiotherapy can happen from months to years after you have completed your treatment.

- 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 happen in 5-10% of patients after radiotherapy. This can happen up to 6 months after completion of radiotherapy but occasionally can last longer and may need treatment. Some people feel the need to open their bowels more frequently than before radiotherapy and occasionally with some urgency, intolerance to some foods may occur
- 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
- There is a risk of lymphoedema or pelvic insufficiency fractures if the pelvic lymph nodes are being covered and which your doctor will be able to discuss with you.

Toilet cards are available, which may make it easier to access toilets in places where there are no public toilets. These are available from Macmillan Cancer Support and Prostate Cancer UK, but we do keep a stock in the department, please ask a member of staff if you would like one.

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.

## Patient Information

### 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 happen as the treatment continues.

It is not usually possible to give you any information on how effective the treatment 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 and are not detailed enough to show us how well the treatment is working.
- 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 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 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).

## Patient Information

### 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.

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.**

#### 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).**

## Patient Information

### **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 / Ambulance

0845 2669662

### **Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL**

0843 2086888

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

0300 0110017

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.

## Patient Information

If you have to rely on the hospital transport service, please make sure 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 (maybe closed due to COVID-19 restrictions).

### 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 allows 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

- The department is usually open from 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday and is closed at weekends and on public holidays.
- On the first day of treatment you will be given a written appointment schedule. Please check these dates and notify your treatment radiographers as soon as possible if you need to change any dates or times.
- Every effort will be made to give you times that you prefer but this cannot be guaranteed.
- 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.

## Patient Information

- There may be breaks in treatment due to public holidays and machine maintenance. These 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.
- 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 another telephone number.

## Counselling

There is a counselling service available at the Arden Centre, for more information, contact your specialist nurse, doctor or radiographer, or telephone 024 7696 7478.

## Further information

**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:** 024 7696 7272

Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

**Radiotherapy Planning:** 024 7696 7493

Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5.00pm

## Patient Information

**Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists:** 024 7696 7290

Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5.00pm

**Acute Oncology** (evenings and weekends)

UHCW switchboard 024 7696 4000

Ask to bleep acute oncology on 1641

**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.prostatecanceruk.org/](http://www.prostatecanceruk.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 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 9:00am to 5:00pm and speak to the **Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist**.

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**.

## Patient Information

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.

### 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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