

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. This can cause some side effects.

We plan radiotherapy 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. 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 will 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.

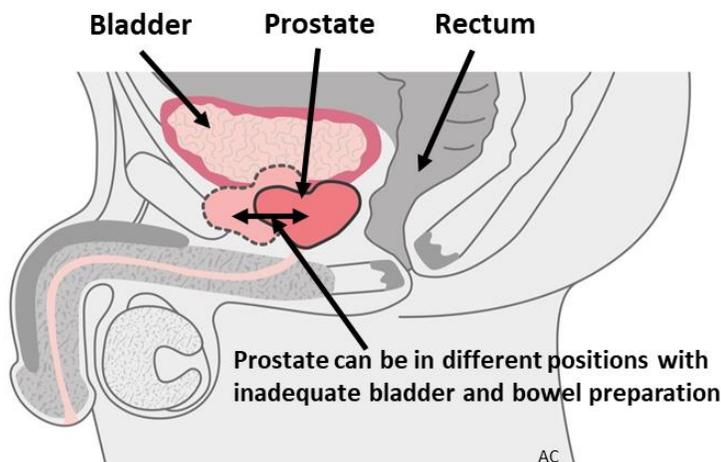
Pacemakers

If you have a pacemaker, or implantable defibrillator, please tell this to 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.

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.



The above diagram illustrates when you have a prostate gland (i.e. this diagram is not illustrative of when the prostate gland has been removed by surgery). Diagram courtesy of Dr A Chan.

Patient Information

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 is. We use a CT scanner, built into the treatment machine, to do this.

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.

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. This is 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 CT planning 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 information and support radiographer on the number below).

Patient Information

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.

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 information and support 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.

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 planning your treatment.

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. 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 CT scan, you will have felt tip pen marks put onto your skin. These are used as 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 the 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, which will be removed after the CT scan. You will be told if you need contrast and given information about it.

Patient Information

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.

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. 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. When you and the 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 to 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.

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 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 thought of as early (acute) and late (chronic).

Early side effects

These happen during your treatment and for a several weeks afterwards.

Effects on the bladder

- An increase in frequency of urination (peeing)
- Passing urine more often at 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

Patient Information

We advise that you:

- Drink plenty of fluids, a minimum of 2 litres (4 pints) 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 2 in 100 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

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 but the following could happen:

- Radiotherapy may cause a skin reaction like exposure to the sun in the treatment area.

Patient Information

- 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 your skin dry
- Avoid wearing tight clothes in the area being treated (cotton is a good natural fibre)
- **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

- Most people will feel tired because of radiotherapy treatment. For some people this can continue for several months after treatment.
- 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.

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.

Patient Information

Bladder changes

This 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 in 100) chance of incontinence.

Bowel changes

Bleeding from the bowel can happen in 5 to 10 in 100 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.

Changes to sexual function and fertility

Impotence or change in sexual experience – radiotherapy can cause this in 30 to 50 in 100 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.

Second malignancy

There is a very small risk of second cancers developing in the area treated and this occurs 25-30 years after treatment.

Other

There is a risk of lymphoedema or pelvic insufficiency fractures if the pelvic lymph nodes are being covered, which your doctor will be able to discuss with you.

Patient Information

A toilet card is 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. 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 information and support radiographer.

Treatment reviews

You will be booked in for a 'treatment review' at some point during your treatment. This review can be with a review radiographer or a doctor.

At this review we will discuss:

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

At these review sessions it's not usually possible to give you any information on how effective the treatment has been so far.

This is for 2 reasons:

- 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 side effects from the treatment will continue for several weeks after the treatment course has been complete. You will receive an appointment to see your consultant 2 - 3 months after finishing treatment. If you haven't received an appointment within 3 weeks of completing treatment, contact your consultant's secretary.

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.

How shall I travel?

By car

You can drive whilst having radiotherapy treatment unless you have been advised not to for another reason.

Sat Nav postcode: CV2 2DX

It can be very difficult to park at busy times, so please allow extra time. There are several visitor car parks across the site. There are also drop-off points near the Arden Centre and the main entrance. These allow 10 minutes of free parking. Disabled car parking facilities are located near the main entrance.

Charges apply in all car parks and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) is live across all visitor car parks. This means that our car parks no longer issue tickets at barriers and instead read your number plate as you enter.

Patient Information

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 may not be available for your CT planning scan or blood tests. It is not available for social or financial reasons.

You may not be entitled to access hospital transport if you:

- receive Disability Living Allowance Mobility Component or
- have a vehicle under the mobility scheme

If you need hospital transport and think you are eligible, you will need to book it yourself giving 48 hours' notice.

Patient Information

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

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. 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.

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 information and support radiographers. for more information.

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.

Patient Information

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.

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.

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. The Centre is located on the ground floor in the main entrance

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

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 information and support radiographer: 024 7696 7290

Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5.00pm

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

NHS advice – use the 111 service

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

The Prostate Cancer Charity

Tel: 0800 074 8383

www.prostatecanceruk.org/

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.

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 information and support radiographer**.

This leaflet was written by Julia Biggs & Michelle Evans, Macmillan information and support radiographer, with help and advice from the

Patient Information

Medical Staff of the Arden Cancer Centre, **University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire.**

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.uhcv.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History

Department:	Oncology
Contact:	27290
Updated:	April 2024
Review:	April 2026
Version:	21
Reference:	HIC/LFT/371/07