

## Arden Cancer Centre

# Radiotherapy Information for Patients Undergoing Total Skin Electron (TSE) Treatment

### What is Total Skin Electron Treatment (TSE)?

Electrons are a form of radiotherapy, or radiation treatment, used to kill cancer cells. Treatment feels similar to having an X-ray; you can't see or experience anything happening. This treatment is non-invasive and not painful.

Electron treatment will only treat the skin surface. Total skin electron treatment is used when the cancer has affected many areas of your skin which cannot be treated with a single electron field. With total skin electron treatment the electron treatment is given to the entire skin surface.

Radiotherapy is delivered by highly trained staff called Therapy Radiographers on machines called Linear Accelerators, although some superficial skin treatments are given on smaller machines.

Both male and female staff will treat you. We are a teaching hospital and have student radiographers on placement in radiotherapy who are supervised by trained staff.

Electron treatment is given in the out-patient department of the Arden Cancer Centre at University Hospital, Coventry. This treatment does **not** make you radioactive.

### 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 the radiographers, **before** your first treatment.

### **Pregnancy**

If you are, or become, pregnant at any time before or during your treatment it is important to **inform a member of staff as soon as possible**. There maybe a risk to an unborn baby from this type of radiotherapy.

### **Planning your treatment**

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

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

Your treatment will then be planned according to your needs. You will be shown how to place yourself in the six treatment positions (see diagrams on the next page).

### **Treatment**

Treatment will start between one to two weeks after the planning appointment.

Treatment is given on four consecutive days: Tuesday to Friday, or Monday to Thursday for two, four or five weeks depending on the regimen chosen. Your doctor will have discussed the most appropriate length of treatment with you in clinic.

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

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

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

## Patient Information

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

You will need to stand for the treatment, holding a bar within the treatment frame. The radiographers will position you for the treatment in the positions shown. You will need to hold each position for a few minutes then change to the next.

Several small measuring devices may be taped onto your skin from your head down to your feet during treatment to measure the radiation doses.

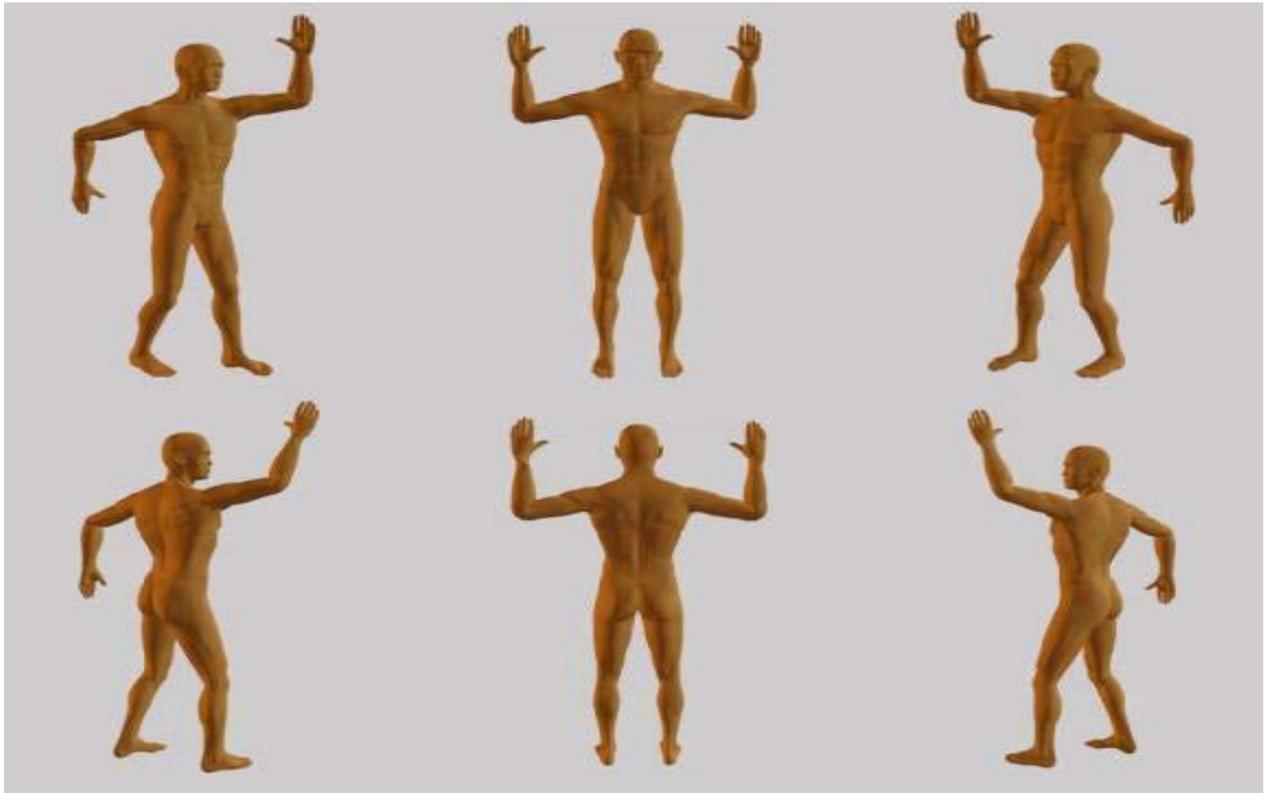
The total treatment each day will last for 45 - 60 minutes; a lot of this time is spent setting up the treatment. You will be in the treatment room by yourself for short periods of time whilst the electrons are switched on. The radiographers will watch you all the time on closed circuit television, and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

You will be given goggles to wear over your eyes for every treatment. The goggles protect your eyes from the radiotherapy. They are heavy and dark. This means that you will not be able to see anything while you are wearing them.

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

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

## Six Treatment Positions



Smith BD, Wilson LD: Management of Mycosis fungoides. Part 2. Treatment. Oncology 17: 1419-1428

### Early side effects of treatment

These early side effects may occur during your treatment and for a short while afterwards: skin reddening, flaking of the skin and irritation, temporary hair loss and a sore mouth. It is very important to keep your mouth as clean as possible at this time.

### Effects on the skin

- Sore skin
- Itchy skin
- Fissures (cracks in the skin)
- Sun sensitivity
- Infection

This treatment will affect the skin all over your body but often patients find their hands and feet the most sore. It is important to continue to use creams and dressings supplied by your doctor to moisturise your skin.

## Patient Information

Please check that they do not contain any metals such as zinc (Zn), silver (Ag) or aluminium (Al). Dressings will have to be removed for treatment but will be reapplied immediately after.

We advise that you:

- Wash daily with your usual soap or shower gel and pat your skin dry with a soft towel.
- Continue to use deodorants if desired, unless they are found to irritate the skin or the skin is broken.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing next to the skin (cotton is a good natural fibre).
- Avoid any perfumes, aftershaves, make-up, hair dye or other creams.
- Avoid the use of sun lamps, spray tans or skin colouring lotions.
- Avoid using hot water bottles or ice packs.
- Keep the treated area out of the sun during treatment and care should be taken in the future by using a high factor sun cream – factor 30 or above.
- Avoid shaving (if you have to shave then use an electric razor for dry shaving only, if you skin is visibly red, stop shaving). No wet shaving, hair removal creams, lasers or wax should be used.
- Avoid using sticky tape for dressings such as Elastoplast or Micropore.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Tell the staff looking after you if you are concerned about any areas of your skin

### **Hair Loss**

Hair loss can occur in the treatment area, so you will lose the hair on your head and body hair. It will usually grow back three to six months after treatment has finished, but there is a risk of permanent hair loss.

### **Brittle Nails**

- During treatment your nails may be shielded to protect them
- They may become brittle and split; keep them trimmed
- Sometimes nails can fall out but they will grow back a few months after treatment has finished

## Patient Information

- Wearing thin cotton gloves will help to protect the nails and prevent them snagging on your clothes or scratching your skin

### Temperature regulation

After total skin electron treatment your sweat glands may not work properly and you may sweat less than before. This should only last a few months but you may need to drink more fluids, avoid strenuous exercise in hot weather and wear extra layers of clothing in cooler weather.

### Fatigue

You may feel tired towards the end of treatment and feel that you have little energy. This will get better but can last for a number of weeks or months after treatment. The suggestions below may help.

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

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

### Effects on the mouth

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

We advise you to:

- Keep your mouth moist with regular sips of water.
- Keep your mouth clean and free from infection by brushing teeth, gums and tongue using a small soft toothbrush (and toothpaste if tolerated) at least twice daily.
- Use a salt-water mouthwash as often as possible to keep your mouth clean. Mix half a teaspoon of salt in a pint of lukewarm water. Use

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this as frequently as possible to gargle or swill around your mouth and then spit out.

- Do not use a commercial mouthwash as they may contain alcohol which will dry and irritate your mouth.
- You may be prescribed medication to keep your mouth clean and help prevent infections.
- Remove and clean dentures after each meal. If dentures are rubbing and causing soreness in your mouth it would be better not to wear them until the treatment has finished.
- Your lips can also become sore, an unfragranced, non-metallic lip balm may help.

### **Other possible early side effects**

- Nose bleeds
- Dry eyes
- Stiffness in hands and feet
- Swelling in ankles and feet

### **Late effects**

These effects may occur months or years after treatment:

- Excess pigmentation in the skin
- Scattered small dilated blood vessels on the skin
- Chronic dry skin
- Decreased sweating
- There may also be partial or complete scalp hair loss in some cases
- Risk of skin cancers

Radiotherapy is recommended as part of your treatment to give you the best chance of control over your disease. However, there is a small increased risk of developing other skin cancers later in life for people who have had radiation treatment, compared with the average population.

### **After treatment**

The side effects from the treatment will continue for several weeks after the treatment course has been completed. Your consultant at the Arden

## Patient Information

Cancer Centre will review your treatment four to six weeks after completion, and may suggest “boost” treatments for areas that are difficult to treat such as groins and armpits. You may then be referred back to your local oncologist or dermatologist.

If you need any help or advice telephone:

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. 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.**

## Patient Information

### **Public Transport**

Many bus routes include the hospital with buses driving onto the site, stopping close to the main entrance. **For more information about bus services to University Hospital call the 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)

### **Leicestershire Ambulance Service / Arriva / Ambuline**

0845 2669662

### **Northamptonshire Ambulance / NSL**

0843 2086888

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

0121 3079116 (for bookings)

01926 310311 (for queries on day of travel)

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

## Patient Information

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 those who are on a low income to claim back some of their travel costs. Please ask to speak to the Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialist for more information.

### **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 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday and is closed at weekends and on public holidays.

Radiotherapy treatment machines are very complex; they are maintained by a team of in-house physicists and technicians. Delays in treatment can occur due to machine breakdowns and servicing.

Breaks in treatment due to public holidays and machine maintenance do not affect most people's treatment. However, some patients may be asked to come in for treatment on these days, when a different treatment machine could be used.

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.

## Patient Information

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.

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, Indian head massage, reflexology and yoga are available to oncology patients. Therapists are volunteers and provide their services to patients free of charge.

Complementary Therapies are by appointment only, please ask a member of staff, or telephone 024 7696 7290.

## Useful information and telephone numbers:

**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 answer phone facility is available.

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

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

Macmillan national helpline: 0808 808 0000

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

## Patient Information

You may find these booklets useful:

Understanding Radiotherapy

Factsheet Understanding Cutaneous TCell Lymphoma

Coping with Fatigue

### **Useful telephone numbers:**

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

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

**Radiotherapy information and advice:** 024 7696 7290

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

**Planning Radiographers:** 024 7696 7454

**NHS advice** - use the 111 service

### **Lymphoma Association**

0808 808 5555

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

### **Cutaneous Lymphoma Foundation**

[www.clfoundation.org](http://www.clfoundation.org)

[info@clfoundation.org](mailto:info@clfoundation.org)

### **Cancer Research UK:**

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

## **Patient Satisfaction**

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

## Patient Information

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

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**.

Authors: Julia Biggs & Alison Crichton, Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists and Linda Farthing, Radiation Therapy Manager, with advice from the medical staff of the Arden Cancer Centre

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

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

For help to stop smoking contact the hospital's stop smoking service on 024 7696 4760

### Document History

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