Patient information for radiotherapy for Ovarian Ablation

The Beatson
West of Scotland Cancer Centre
1053 Great Western Road,
Glasgow G12 0YN
This leaflet is for patients undergoing a short course of radiotherapy to the pelvis for ovarian ablation. Ovarian ablation stops the ovaries from producing the hormone oestrogen. This treatment may be beneficial for patients undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

We treat each patient as an individual and the effects of treatment may vary from one patient to another. Your doctor, radiographers and nurses will explain specific details to you.

Before agreeing to this treatment, it is important that you understand its nature and some of the possible side effects. This leaflet contains some general advice about what to expect, and how to best cope during your radiotherapy treatment. If you have any questions or problems, let us know as soon as possible.

**Preparation for Treatment**

Before you can begin your radiotherapy, the treatment must be carefully planned. This will be at the CT Simulator (a machine similar to a CT scanner) or at the Simulator (a special x-ray machine similar to the treatment machine).

You will be asked to remove your trousers or skirt and you will lie on your back. It is easier to position you in this way and will be more comfortable. You may keep your underwear on, however we may need to slip these down. We will ensure your dignity is maintained and keep you covered wherever possible.

The couch is a little hard but you will not have to be there too long and your radiographers will make you as comfortable as possible.

We will then draw on your skin with a felt tip pen and tape small markers to your skin which show on our scan.
These will be removed when the planning is complete. When the scan is complete and your treatment has been planned by your doctor we will replace the pen markings with a permanent mark. The mark is tiny, no larger than a pin head. This is an important reference mark that the radiographers will use to reproduce your treatment every day.

Your treatment will normally start within a few days of the Simulator appointment.

**Treatment**

Radiotherapy treatment is planned and delivered by specially trained professionals called therapy radiographers. The treatment machine is called a linear accelerator. The radiographers will explain the treatment process to you before you start.

- The treatment is painless and usually takes around ten minutes.
- You will lie in the position you were in when your treatment was planned.
- The radiographers will dim the lights for a short time while they position the treatment machine. They will then leave the room to switch the machine on.
- The machine will be on for about one minute and the radiographers will be watching you the whole time on a television screen outside.

You will feel no different immediately afterwards. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to your radiographer.
Effects of treatment (early)

Please remember that everyone is different and will experience side effects to different degrees, therefore this list is a general guide.

• Your periods will stop. This can take up to three months or so. During this time it is still possible to become pregnant so it is important to use a reliable contraceptive. If you are on any hormonal injections, please continue to take these.

• You may suffer from diarrhoea, nausea and stomach cramps. This is temporary, lasting no longer than a few weeks and can be reduced with medication.

• The skin in the treated area will be more sensitive and may become pink and itchy. This tends to be a couple of weeks into your treatment. It can be relieved with creams, however it is important that you only use creams provided by the medical staff. Please tell us if you have any problems.

• You may feel tired as the treatment continues, again this tends to happen a couple of weeks into your treatment.

Effects of treatment (late)

We believe that the benefit of your radiotherapy treatment far outweighs any risks involved. However, there are potential long term effects that may affect a small number of people. It is important to point out that effects can vary from person to person and your doctor will explain specific individual issues to you personally. The following is a general guide.

• You will always be sensitive to the effects of the sun; especially during the first year after your treatment
on the area you have been treated. Protect yourself with total sun block.

- Low levels of the hormone oestrogen can increase the risk of weakening of the bones (osteoporosis) as women get older. Please ask your doctor for advice on how best to deal with this.

- Very rarely radiotherapy can cause other tumours to develop in later years. Although this is a serious consequence of your treatment, it is important to bear in mind that it is very rare.

**Menopausal Symptoms**

Due to the lack of the hormone oestrogen in your body you will start to experience menopausal symptoms. An induced menopause can mean these symptoms tend to come on quicker and more intense compared to a natural menopause. These side effects can include:

- Hot flushes. This is the most common symptom. Wear loose clothing made from natural fibres. Limit food and drinks that can trigger the flushes, for example spicy food and hot drinks.

- Night sweats. Sleeping in a well ventilated room with a window open can help with this. Again, limiting hot drinks at night may help to reduce this.

- Vaginal dryness. A water based lubricating gel can help counteract this dryness. Please let us know if you have any problems.

- Loss of sex drive.
After treatment ends

Remember that any symptoms that have developed because of the treatment will gradually settle down. The tiredness can take a few weeks to leave you so please don’t worry and think that things are going wrong. Your doctor will arrange to see you about around 6-8 weeks after your treatment has finished.

Where can I get help?

All the staff are here to make sure your treatment goes as smoothly as possible and will try to help with any questions or problems you may have. Further specialist help and information is available from:

- Information and Support Radiographer: 0141 301 7427
- Clinical Nurse Specialist: 0141 301 7636 / 0141 301 7639
- Macmillan Information Radiographer: 0141 301 7423

We have an Information Centre on Level 1 where you can find further information and signposting to other services

Tel: 0141 301 7390

The Beatson Cancer Centre has a Radiotherapy Advice Line available for patients that have completed treatment. This is an answer phone service which is run by experienced radiographers. Please leave your name, contact telephone number and a brief description of your concern. The advice line is checked periodically so we will return your call as soon as possible. It can help us if you also leave your hospital number or date of birth.

Tel: 0141 301 7432
Counselling and Clinical Psychology Service

This leaflet deals with the physical aspect of your treatment, but your emotional well being is just as important to us. Within the department we have a counselling and clinical psychology service that can help with worries and difficulties you might be having. If you think this might be helpful to you, please ask the staff to put you in touch.

There are also voluntary organisations providing information and support, these include:

- **Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 800 0000** - cancer information nurses can provide information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment, and on the practical and emotional aspects of living with cancer.

- **Cancer Support Scotland (Tak Tent)** - based in The Calman Cancer Support Centre, Gartnavel Complex: **0800 652 4531** Provides emotional and practical support on a one-to-one basis and through community based groups. It also provides a variety of complementary therapies.

- **Maggie’s Centre The Gatehouse - 0141 330 3311**
- **Maggie’s Gartnavel - 0141 357 2269**
- **Maggie’s Wishaw General - 01698 358392** Maggie’s Centre provides a comprehensive cancer support programme for people and their families affected by cancer

- **Macmillan Benefits Team (within the Beatson) - 0141 301 7374** Provides free and confidential advice for people affected by cancer and their carers.

- **Beatson Cancer Centre** – if you want to find out more about our Centre please visit www.beatson.scot.nhs.uk