Patient Information for

Radiotherapy Treatment to the Eye (orbit)
There are a variety of different conditions that may require radiotherapy treatment to the eye (orbit). Your doctor will explain specific aspects of your treatment.

Patients who have the benign condition Thyroid Eye Disease may also attend for treatment if, due to the nature of this disease, they have suffered double vision or inflammation surrounding the optic nerve.

This leaflet describes the radiotherapy planning and treatment. It also explains the effects you may experience during and after treatment and how best to cope with them. We treat each patient as an individual and the effects of treatment may vary from one patient to another, therefore the information given here is intended as a general guide.

**Preparation for Treatment**

Before you begin your treatment we must carefully plan it. You will need to have a mask made (also called a shell), which you will wear for your treatment each day. This is important because:

- It enables the Radiographers to give your treatment in the correct area each day.
- It helps to support your head and keep it from moving during treatment.
- We put the marks necessary to guide us onto the shell and not your skin.

The mask is made to fit you in the **tt**.

**Mould Room**

The type of mask which is used for radiotherapy treatment to the head is called an orfit mask or a Beam Directional Shell (BDS). This is made of plastic mesh (see Picture 1). The process of making the mask will be explained to you in detail by the
Mould Room team at your appointment. Making the mask is completely painless. The plastic mesh material that the mask is made of has small holes in it, which allow you to breathe freely.

Picture 1: Mask or BDS

**Treatment Planning - CT Simulator**

Before your course of radiotherapy can begin, we need to produce an individual treatment plan for you. You will visit the CT simulator. This is very similar to a normal CT scanner and is specially designed for planning radiotherapy treatment. This ensures that all the area needing treatment is included and that other organs are avoided as much as possible. This may be on the same day as your mask is fitted.

For this scan you may need to have an injection of contrast (dye) that will help us to see the area we want to treat more clearly.

You will wear your mask for the scan.

The radiographers will put markers on the mask that will show up on the CT scan. This scan does not take long, usually about 10-15 minutes. You will be monitored all the time by your radiographers.
**Radiotherapy Treatment**

The number of treatments you get depends on your particular condition. Your doctor will have given you some idea of the number of treatments at your first visit.

Your treatment can take from 2-6 weeks to complete. Radiotherapy is usually only given once a day, Monday to Friday.

Your radiographers will explain everything to you before treatment starts and check that you know what to expect.

- Your radiographers will ask you to lie on the couch, just as you were in the CT simulator. Once they have put your mask on they will dim the lights in the room while they position you for your treatment.

- Your radiographers will leave the room while the machine is switched on. They will be watching you the whole time on closed circuit TV.

- Radiotherapy treatment is painless and you should feel no different afterwards.

- The whole process only takes about 10 minutes.

- If you have any questions or are unsure about anything to do with your treatment, please speak to your radiographers.

**General Advice during treatment**

There is no reason to change your lifestyle completely during treatment. However it may help to:

- Try to get enough rest and sleep, especially when the treatment begins to make you feel tired. It is also important that you try to continue with some of your normal daily activities.
A sensible balance between rest and activity may be most beneficial. Research has shown that gentle exercise is also beneficial for people who have had a cancer diagnosis both in the short and longer term. There are programmes available that can help with this. Please let us know if you are interested in finding out more.

- If you drive, please check with your doctor that it is safe to do so during and after treatment.

**Skincare**

Radiotherapy only affects the skin that is within the area being treated. Please follow these instructions during your radiotherapy and for a few weeks after it has finished:

- You should wash the area being treated but it is important that this is done very gently, using lukewarm water. Extra care should be taken when drying the area – carefully pat the skin dry with a soft towel.

- When washing your hair, try to take care and avoid the shampoo getting near your eyes.

- Make-up should not be used on the area of skin being treated. It is best not to use eye make-up including mascara during the course of your treatment.

- If the weather is hot and sunny it is best to try and avoid exposure to bright sunlight. You can do this by sitting in the shade, wearing sunglasses or wearing a wide brimmed hat.

**Early effects of radiotherapy treatment**

**Eye problems**

Some patients may experience some irritation in the corner of the eye (medial canthus) and an increase in tears (watery
eyes). You may also have some inflammation of your eyelids (conjunctivitis) which can be treated with steroids. Please tell us if you are troubled with any of these side effects.

**Tiredness**
You may begin to feel quite tired during treatment. This tends to start a couple of weeks after starting your treatment and can last for some time after treatment has finished.

**Skin**
The skin in the treated area will be more sensitive and may become pink or red. Again, this tends to be a couple of weeks into treatment. This can be treated with specific creams. The staff here can give you a cream to use. If you would prefer to use your own, please check with your radiographers that it is the correct type of cream.

**Hair loss**
There will be a loss of hair in the area treated and in the area where the radiotherapy beam exits. Your radiographer can show you this. You may find that you lose your eyelashes. This is usually temporary, although in some patients they may not re-grow.

**After radiotherapy**
Your body will take some time, often 4-6 weeks, before gradually returning to normal. Your Consultant will organise a follow-up appointment to see you at the Beatson clinic roughly 6-8 weeks after your treatment has finished.

**Possible later effects of treatment**
We believe that the benefit of your radiotherapy treatment outweighs any longer-term risks involved. However, you should be aware of these potential long-term effects, which
may affect a small number of people. It is important to point out again that effects can vary from person to person and your doctor will explain specific individual issues to you personally. The following effects are a general guide:

- The area you have had treated will always be sensitive to the effects of the sun; especially during the first year after your treatment. Protect yourself with total sun block, sunglasses or a hat.

- You may have slightly ‘gritty’ eyes, which sometimes require long-term use of eye drops and/or ointment. Your doctor will advise you about this.

- You may lose your eyelashes permanently.

- A cataract (cloudiness of the lens) may occur because of radiotherapy. If it occurs, it usually happens several years after treatment. Again, your doctor will be able to advise you further about this.

- A very rare but potential effect is that radiation can cause tumours. Although this is a serious possible consequence of your radiotherapy, it is important to bear in mind that it is extremely rare. If it does happen, it is likely to be many years after treatment has ended.

Where can I get help?

Information and support

This leaflet deals with the physical aspects of your treatment but your emotional wellbeing is just as important to us. If you are diagnosed with cancer, it can be a deeply distressing time for you and those closest to you. Within the department we have a counselling/support and clinical psychology service to help you if necessary. If you think this may be helpful to you, please ask staff to put you in touch.
Macmillan Information Radiographer & Counsellor: 0141 301 7423

Information and Support Radiographer: 0141 301 7427

If you want to discuss any aspect of your treatment before attending the Centre please call.

The Beatson Cancer Centre has a Radiotherapy Advice Line available for patients who have completed treatment. The Advice line is not manned full time but checked at intervals for messages. Please leave your full name, telephone number and a brief description of your reason for calling and we will call you back. It can help us a lot if you can also leave your hospital number or date of birth.

Tel: 0141 301 7432

The Cancer Centre also has a Cancer Treatment Helpline for urgent calls. This is for patients on or within 6 weeks of treatment who have urgent or severe symptoms such as -

- Shivering or flu-like symptoms.
- Temperature greater than 37.5 C.
- Gum/nose bleeds or unusual bruising.
- Worsening or sudden breathlessness.
- Leg weakness/difficulty walking.
- Severe nausea/vomiting/diarrhoea/constipation.
- Sudden increases or uncontrolled pain.
- Other concerning symptoms associated with your cancer treatment.

The line is available 24 hours for emergencies, although it would be helpful if you called early in the day if this is at all possible.
For Urgent Calls:

Beatson 8am-8pm Tel: 0141 301 7990

National 8pm-8am Tel: 0800 917 7711

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

Tel: 0141 301 7390

There are also voluntary organisations providing information and support. Please note the Cancer Centre is not responsible for the content of any of these sites and it is up to yourself as an individual to decide if they are helpful to you. These include

- **Macmillan Cancer Support:** 0808 808 0000
  www.macmillan.org.uk
  Providing practical, medical and financial support for those affected by cancer.

- **Maggie’s Gartnavel:** 0141 357 2269

- **Maggie’s Lanarkshire, Monklands Hospital:** 01236 771 199

- **Maggie’s Forth Valley:** 01324 868069

Maggie’s Centre provides a comprehensive cancer support programme for people and their families affected by cancer.

- **Cancer Support Scotland – (Tak Tent), The Calman Centre, Gartnavel Complex.** Freephone 0800 652 4531 or 0141 337 8199.

Provides emotional and practical support on a one-to-one basis and through community based groups. Complementary therapies available.

www.cancersupportscotland.org
• Changing Faces : 0300 0120 275
www.changingfaces.org.uk
Offers help, advice and information for anyone who has a condition or injury that affects their appearance.

• Let’s Face It: 01843 491 291
www.lets-face-it.org.uk
Provides supportive links for people with experience of facial disfigurement, especially facial cancer.

• Thyroid Eye Disease Charitable Trust (TeDct): 07469921782
Provides information, care and support to those affected by Thyroid Eye Disease.

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

• If you are interested in finding out about becoming more active, please visit: www.nhsggc.org.uk/getactive

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

• NHS 24 111