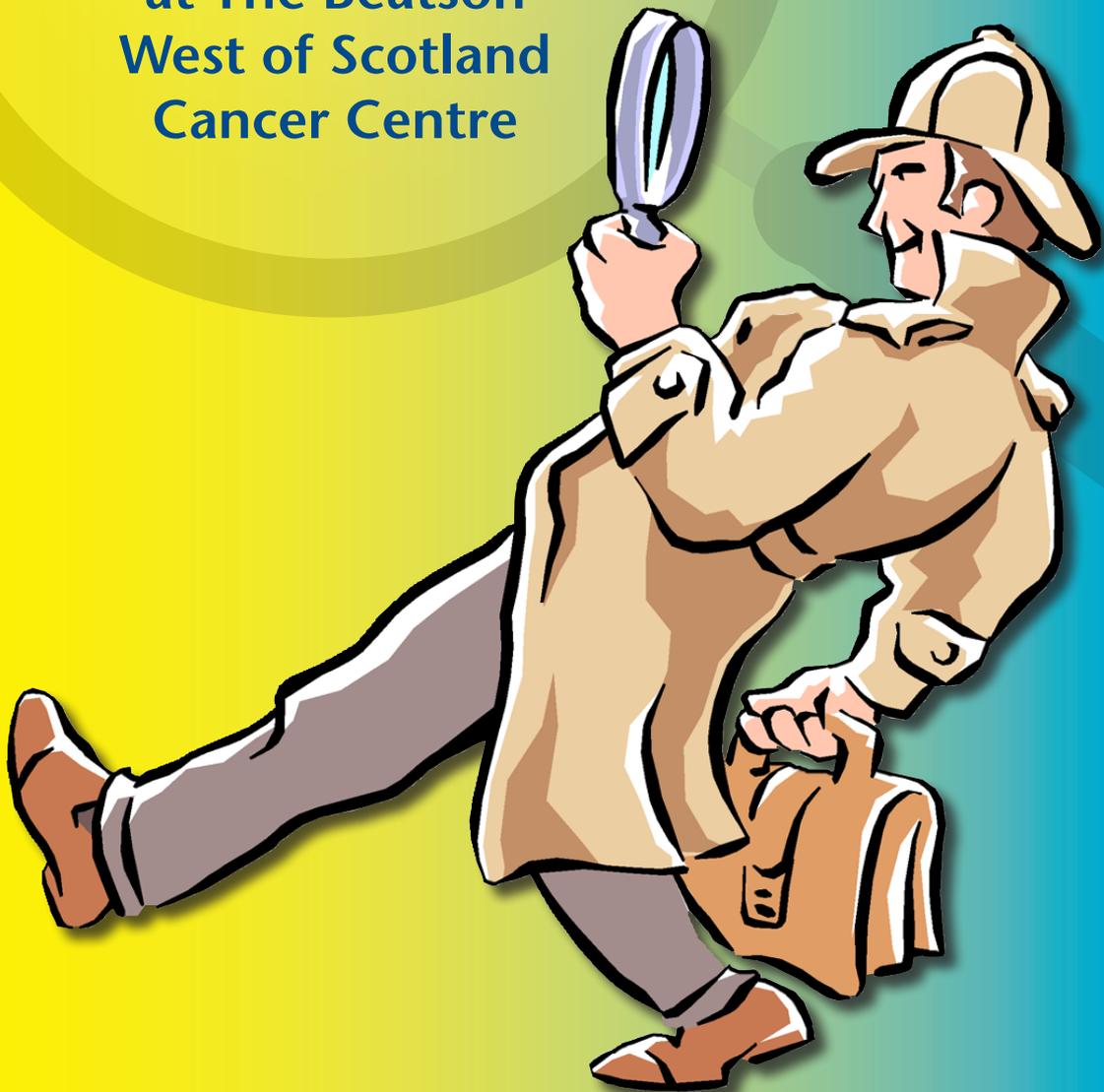


Let's investigate

# Radiotherapy Treatment

at The Beatson  
West of Scotland  
Cancer Centre



A Patient Information Booklet

This booklet has been written to help you understand what will happen to you when you come to **The Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre** to have radiotherapy treatment. It explains how your treatment is planned and given. It also discusses some side effects you may experience and provides some useful contacts.



Picture 1 - Tom Wheldon Building



Picture 2 -  
Beatson Main  
Entrance



## Types of people you will meet at the Beatson (WOSCC)

### Clinical Oncologists

Doctors who study tumours and try to find the best way of getting rid of them. These doctors also plan your radiotherapy treatment.

### Therapy Radiographers

You will see the radiographers when you come for your scan and each day at the treatment machine. Their job is to help plan your treatment and deliver your radiotherapy.

### Paediatric Liaison Nurse

This is a nurse who will support you through your treatment, and help you with any problems that you might have during your radiotherapy.

### Paediatric Radiographer

This is a radiographer who will be at the unit every day during your treatment. They will explain the process of radiotherapy and answer any questions you may have before and during your treatment.

## What is radiotherapy?

Your body is made up of lots (billions) of really tiny bits called cells. Normal cells can change into cells that grow in a different way to other cells (sometimes they are called 'abnormal' / bad cells). We don't fully understand why this happens. These abnormal cells then divide (split up) and multiply to make more of themselves and make a lump. This lump is called a tumour.

Radiotherapy is a type of treatment that uses strong x-rays to kill the abnormal cells, or to try and stop them from growing.



## Why do I need radiotherapy?

You will already have had lots of tests and scans to find out what type of tumour you have.

Without treatment, this tumour may grow bigger and abnormal cells might travel to other parts of your body. To try to stop this from happening, your Doctor has recommended you receive a course of radiotherapy as part of your overall treatment plan. You might already have had chemotherapy and/or an operation.

# Radiotherapy- planning and treatment

Before your first visit to the Beatson, you and your parents will meet with your doctor. Your doctor will speak to you about the radiotherapy. They will also discuss the benefits and side effects with you and make sure you agree to have the treatment. A consent form will need to be signed by you and/or your parents before treatment can begin.

## Planning preparation

It is very important for radiotherapy that you stay still and in the same position each day for treatment. Sometimes, to make this easier for you, we make you a special mask called a Beam Directional Shell (BDS). This is usually only if you are having your head or upper chest area treated.

The mask is made in the Mould Room. Having the mask made does not hurt. It is made of a special thin plastic that is warmed up and moulded to your shape. It then sets in the shape of your face or chest. It is used for your planning scan and each day for your treatment.

The mould room staff will talk to you about the mask and answer any questions you might have. If you would like your mask decorated like the ones shown below, the mould room staff may be able to do this for you.



Picture 3+4 -  
Mask

If you are having a limb (arm or leg) treated, you may have to have a special board made to help keep your limb in the same position each day for treatment. It is made with the same kind of material used to make the masks. The board will be made by the mould room staff who will explain it all to you.



Picture 5 - Limb board

## **What is a planning appointment?**

This is where your radiotherapy treatment is carefully planned just for you using a special x-ray machine called a CT simulator. You will probably have had a CT scan before, this is very similar.

Before you have your scan, if you are 12 years or older, we will have to check that you are not pregnant. Your radiographers or your Doctor will ask either you or your parent/guardian to sign a form to confirm that you are not pregnant. Radiation used during the scan can cause risks to the foetus; it is therefore very important that you let us know if you are or could be pregnant.

Your radiographers might ask you to remove some of your clothing for your scan. They will cover you whenever possible. They will help you to lie on the CT couch. It is a little hard but you will not have to lie there for too long. Your radiographers will make you as comfortable as possible.

They will put some temporary marks on your skin with a felt tip pen and place some small markers on to your skin. These markers show up on your scan and will be removed when the scan is complete.

Your radiographers will move the couch into the CT scanner and leave the room. Don't worry, they can see you through a window. As you go through the scanner you will be aware of some noise but will not feel anything.



Picture 6 - CT Scanner

## Tattoo

Once the scan is finished, your radiographers might have to make some of the pen marks more permanent so that they are still visible when you come for your treatment. The radiographers do this by giving you some small tattoos. These are permanent tiny dots on your skin. They look a bit like a full stop or a freckle. The radiographers have to use a small needle with some ink to make these tattoos. It shouldn't be too sore and it is very quick.



## How long will the planning take?

It takes about 30 minutes to do the scan. Some of this time is making sure you are comfortable lying on the CT couch.

Your radiographers will make sure you are in the correct position.

## About your treatment

### What will I have to do?

You will have to lie very still on a special couch for between 15 and 45 minutes, depending on your treatment. Your radiographers will help to make you as comfortable as possible. It is important that you stay still to ensure that the treatment is given accurately.

The couch you are lying on moves underneath the machine. The machine will move around you but it will never touch you. You won't see or feel anything. The machine makes a slight buzzing noise and there is a quiet siren noise that you might hear as well. We can play music for you. If you have an iPod or a mobile phone with music on it, please bring it with you.

The treatment does not hurt. You won't see or feel anything.



# Radiotherapy machines

The radiotherapy machine you will have your treatment on is called a linear accelerator.

You will lie on the treatment couch exactly as you were in the CT scanner. Your radiographers will position you carefully and move the machine so it is in exactly the right position for your treatment. The machine will have to move around you to give you your treatment from different directions. It won't touch you.

You will have to lie as still as you can but you can breathe normally.

## Will anybody be able to come into the room with me?

No one else is allowed in the treatment room with you during your radiotherapy. Your radiographers will watch you on a special TV screen outside the room.

## How many treatments will I have?

This varies for each patient but is usually between 2 and 7 weeks.

## When do I come for treatment?

You will be given a list of all the dates and times to come for your treatment. This will be everyday, Monday to Friday, including public/bank holidays. The treatment rooms are closed at the weekend so you won't come for treatment on Saturdays or Sundays.



Picture 7 - Linear accelerator

## **Can I visit the department before my treatment starts?**

It may be possible for you to come to the hospital and have a look around the department before you start your treatment. Your paediatric radiographer could show you the different rooms you might visit and explain what will happen when your treatment starts.

## **Will I have to stay in hospital?**

Most people have their radiotherapy as an outpatient, which means that you come to the hospital each day and go home again unless you require any other treatments at The Royal Hospital for Children.

## **What happens if I miss a treatment?**

It will usually be added on at the end. It is very important to try not to miss any treatments if you can.

Sometimes, you might have your treatment on another machine. All the machines are the same and do the same treatment.

## **Will a doctor see me during my course of treatment?**

You will be seen weekly at The Royal Hospital for Children. Any side effects or other worries you may have can be discussed here.

You can also talk to your radiographers or paediatric liaison nurse who will be happy to answer your questions.



# What are the side effects of radiotherapy?

The side effects you experience will depend on which part of your body is being treated. Some parts of your body are more sensitive than others. You might not experience all of the following side effects.

## Tiredness

Nearly all people having radiotherapy feel tired. This can happen whilst you are having your treatment and can last for sometime afterwards.

It is good to try to still do some of the things you enjoy doing. Sometimes a little bit of exercise can help with your tiredness.

It might help to go to bed a little bit earlier.

## Skin

Sometimes the area of your skin being treated can become pink and warm. It may become dry and itchy and sometimes sore and red or even blister. If your skin gets irritated by the treatment, we can give you some cream to use.

You should wash your skin with lukewarm water and an unperfumed soap. Pat your skin dry gently with a soft towel.

If your skin becomes irritated during your treatment, you can use Cetraben cream to help soothe it.

If you are having treatment in an area that you shave, it is best to use an electric razor, or not shave at all until after the treatment has finished and your skin has settled down.

Wear comfortable clothes. Loose clothing with cotton next to your skin can be best.



You will need to protect the treatment area from the sun by covering up. When the treatment has finished, this area of skin will always be more sensitive to the sun. You should therefore use sunscreen with both UVA/UVB protection with minimum SPF 30 while in the sun. We advise you not to swim while you are having radiotherapy as this could irritate your skin.

## Eating

Try to eat a good variety of foods. Your body needs extra energy during treatment.

Drink plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated.

If you are having your tummy or pelvis treated, you may get diarrhoea. If this happens, you should try not to eat a lot of fruit or vegetables as these can make your bowels looser.

## Hair

Radiotherapy may make you lose hair in the area treated. If you are having chemotherapy as well, you may lose all of your hair.

## Feelings and worries

Being diagnosed with a tumour can be a deeply distressing time for you and those closest to you. It is better to discuss your feelings with somebody rather than keeping them to yourself. If you don't find it easy to talk to your family, you can talk to your radiographers, nurses, doctors, play specialist or clinical liaison nurse about anything.

Sometimes you might find it easier to write down how you are feeling. You might find that you have a mixture of emotions all at once and that can be difficult.

## What about school?

You can go to school every day during your radiotherapy if you are well enough and want to go.

If you have had time off school, it can sometimes take awhile to get used to being back. You may still get very tired and find it difficult to concentrate. People will understand. Speak to your teacher if you are struggling.

## Will my friends understand?

Your friends will want to be there to help support you. Why don't you give them this leaflet to read to help them understand what you are going through?



## Contacts

### Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre

Reception Desk: 0141 301 7600

Booking office: 0141 301 7300

Radiotherapy Advice Line: 0141 301 7432

Dr Cowie's Secretary: 0141 301 7067

### Paediatric Liaison Nurse

Shona Mills: 0141 301 7337

Page number: 15185

Email: [shona.mills@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:shona.mills@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

### Paediatric Radiographer

Jill Scott

0141 301 7446

Email: [jill.scott@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:jill.scott@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

Teenage Cancer Trust has a unit within Ward B4 and B7 in the Beatson. There is a chill out zone located in B7.

Tel: 0141 301 7586 or 0141 301 7616

Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) can be contacted via [www.cclg.org.uk](http://www.cclg.org.uk)

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

CLIC Sargent's specialist care teams provide help, support and guidance for young cancer patients and their families.

<http://www.youngcancer.scot.nhs.uk/>

Information for children and young people with cancer and their families/carers in Scotland.





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