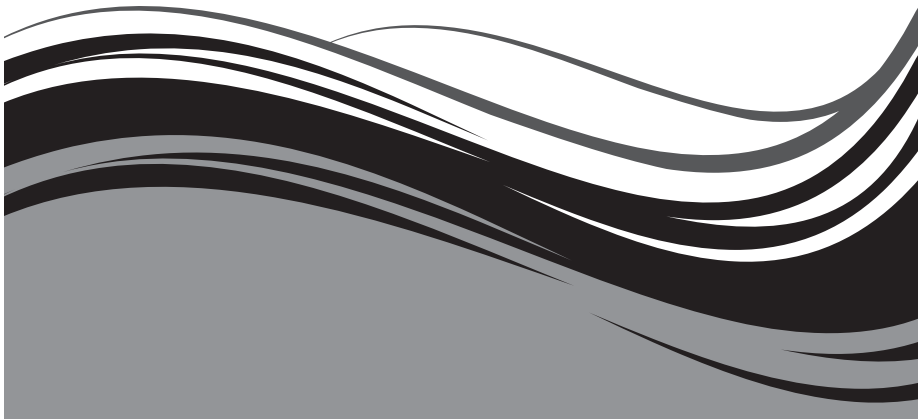


Information for Patients

Receiving a Short Course of Radiotherapy to the Pelvis or Abdomen



This leaflet is for patients attending for radiotherapy treatment to their pelvis or tummy (abdomen).

This leaflet describes:

- What is Radiotherapy?
- Your radiotherapy planning and treatment.
- The effects you may experience during and after treatment.
- Advice on how best to cope with these effects.
- Who to contact if you have any questions or concerns.

What is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of carefully measured doses of radiation to treat cancer.

Your doctor has decided to give you this treatment to help with some of your symptoms. These symptoms will vary but they may include:

- **pain**
- **bleeding**
- **areas of swelling causing discomfort.**

Most patients having radiotherapy are treated using a high energy beam of X-rays delivered to a precise area.

Therapy radiographers operate the radiotherapy planning and treatment machines and will be able to answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

You will receive a list of appointments which will include your planning and treatment dates and times. You will be attending for 1-10 treatments.

If you are in doubt about anything or have any questions or problems, please let us know as soon as possible.

Preparation for Treatment

Before your radiotherapy begins, your treatment must be carefully planned. This will take place at the CT simulator.



Picture 1- CT Simulator

The CT simulator is similar to a CT scanner. Your radiographers may ask you to remove your trousers or skirt. This makes it easier to lie in the correct position and is more comfortable. Once you are lying on the CT couch, we may also ask you to slip your underwear down to uncover the area that is being treated. Your radiographers will ensure your dignity is maintained by covering you whenever possible. If you are uncomfortable let your radiographers know. They will do their best to make you more comfortable.

Once you are in the correct position, your radiographers will put some pen marks and stickers on the skin on your pelvis or tummy. They will move the couch into the scanner and leave the room to start the scan. They can see and hear you at all times. It is important that you stay as still as you can during the scan and breathe normally. It will only take a few minutes.

Once the scan is finished, your radiographers will replace the pen marks with little permanent marks (tattoos). They look like small freckles. These marks are used by your radiographers each day to ensure you are in the correct position for treatment. Most people will get 3 tattoos.

Radiotherapy Treatment

Your treatment will usually start within a few days of your planning appointment.

The machine used to deliver your radiotherapy treatment is called a Linear Accelerator. This is shown in the picture below:



Picture 2- Linear Accelerator

Each time you come for treatment your radiographers will position you as you were in the CT simulator. The equipment used to position you will also be the same. Your radiographers will make you as comfortable as possible. The couch will move up and underneath the machine. When your radiographers are happy with your position, they will leave the room to start your treatment. They will monitor you closely on closed circuit TV. They can see and hear you at all times.

The machine will move round about you but it won't touch you. There is nothing to feel during treatment or immediately afterwards. Your treatment usually takes around 10 minutes. It is important that you stay as still as you can and breathe normally. This will be the same every day.

Your radiotherapy will be given in small doses, Monday to Friday, but not at the weekend.

If you have any questions please ask.

Effects of Treatment

The effects of treatment vary from one person to another and the information given here is a general guide. Not everyone will have the same side effects. Your doctor and radiographers will explain your treatment and any side effects that you may experience. Below is a list of possible side effects:

Tiredness: During your treatment, you may feel more tired than usual. The tiredness can last for some time after treatment has finished.

Bladder: The inside of your bladder may become a little irritated, like cystitis. You may need to pass urine more often than usual, and may have a burning sensation when passing urine. Drinking plenty of water will help.

Bowel: You may notice a change in your bowel movements. You may need to move your bowels more frequently and the stools you pass may be softer. This may be accompanied by colicky or wind pains. You should drink plenty of fluids and try to avoid foods that are likely to make these symptoms worse, such as spicy foods.

Skin: The skin in the treated area will be more sensitive and may become pink, red, dry or itchy. This can be treated with creams; however it is very important that you use only those given to you or recommended by Beatson staff. Check with your radiographers if you are unsure.

Hair: There will be a loss of hair only in the treated area. This is usually temporary, although in some patients it may not regrow.

Nausea: If you are having treatment in the abdomen (tummy) area, you may feel sick after the treatment has finished or later in the evening. Your doctor will give you tablets to help if this is likely.

It is important you let your radiographers know how you are feeling every day, as there may be things they can do to help.

Skin Care during Treatment

Radiotherapy only affects the area of the body that we are treating. Bathe as normal, ensuring that the water is not too hot and pat your skin dry. Avoid putting anything overly hot or cold (hot water bottle or hot/cold packs) on the treated area.

General Advice following radiotherapy

The treatment may at first make your symptoms slightly worse. However any symptoms that have developed because of the treatment will gradually settle down.

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.

Any side-effects you experience may last for a few weeks. It is important to let your GP know if you feel these symptoms are not settling.

What do I do if I feel unwell?

If you suddenly feel unwell and are unable to come for treatment, contact your GP and also let your treatment unit know. **It is important that you try to attend each appointment.** If you manage to come for your radiotherapy but feel unwell, let your radiographers know as soon as you arrive and they can arrange for you to be seen.

If you are unwell and have completed your treatment you must contact your own GP, Radiotherapy Advice Line or the Cancer Treatment Helpline (see Where can I get help section overleaf).

After Treatment Ends

Your doctor will arrange to see you at a follow-up appointment after your treatment is complete. This may be a few weeks after your final appointment. We will send you the appointment details.

Where can I Get Help?

Information and Support

All our 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

The Macmillan Information & Support Centre is on Level 1 at the main entrance of the Beatson. They offer emotional support, information and signposting to services within and near to The Beatson and in your own local area. Open Monday to Friday 8.15am to 4.15pm. Please visit or phone on

☎ 0141 301 7390

The Cancer Centre has a **Radiotherapy Advice Line** available for patients who have completed treatment and have a **non-urgent** query. This is an answer phone service, available from Monday – Friday. Please leave your name, date of birth and contact number and we will call you back as soon as possible.

☎ 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 increased 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 ☎ 0141 301 7990

National 8pm-8am ☎ 0800 917 7711

Counselling and Clinical Psychology

This leaflet deals with the physical aspects of your treatment, but your emotional well-being is just as important to us. Being diagnosed with cancer can be a deeply distressing time for you and those closest to you. Within the department we have a clinical psychology service that can help with worries and difficulties you might be having. If you think this may be helpful to you, please ask staff to put you in touch.

There are also voluntary organisations providing information and support. These include;

Macmillan Cancer Support:	 0808 808 0000  www.macmillan.org.uk
Providing practical, medical, emotional and financial advice for those affected by cancer.	
Maggie's Gartnavel Maggie's Lanarkshire, Monklands Hospital Maggie's Forth Valley	 0141 357 2269  01236 771 199  01324 868 069  www.maggies.org
Maggie's Centre provides a comprehensive cancer support programme for people and their families affected by cancer.	
Cancer Support Scotland – The Calman Centre, Gartnavel Complex.	Freephone  0800 652 4531  www.cancersupportscotland.org
Provides emotional and practical support on a one-to-one basis and through community based groups. Complementary therapies available.	

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	 www.beatson.scot.nhs.uk
------------------------------	--

If you want to find out more about our Centre please visit our website.

Beatson Cancer Charity	 www.beatsoncancercharity.org
-------------------------------	--

Provides support for patients and families within The Beatson.

Get Active	 www.nhsggc.org.uk/getactive
-------------------	--

If you are interested in finding out about becoming more active, please visit our website.

NHS 24	 111
---------------	---

Leaflet written by H. Reid May 2017
Leaflet reviewed by K. McKenzie May 2023
QA approved by H. Reid May 2023

Review Date: May 2025

mi • 297740 v3.0