



***PATIENT
INFORMATION***

**Cancer of Rectum
(Female)**

Radiotherapy Information for Torbay Hospital patients

The following information is not intended to be comprehensive, but should give you an idea of what to expect during and soon after your radiotherapy treatment here at Torbay.

General Principles of Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy means the delivery of powerful x-ray beams to a carefully defined area of the body containing a cancer or from where the cancer has been removed.

The type of radiotherapy you will receive is called “external beam”. This means that the radiation is delivered from a machine, which generates x-rays, a “linear accelerator”. The radiation is only produced when the machine is turned on so once your treatment is finished you do not become radioactive.

Arrangements for your Radiotherapy

You will be telephoned with an appointment for a CT scan.

It is very important that we can target the radiotherapy as accurately as possible. To this end, a CT scan with you lying in the same position as for the radiotherapy itself, enables us to locate the area to be treated. You will have some small permanent marks on your skin, with your consent. These are used to help reproduce your position accurately during treatment. If you do not wish to have these marks, then the radiographers will discuss other options plus the additional responsibilities on your part to ensure temporary marks are not lost.

Verification: A further image may be taken on the treatment set to confirm your position prior to commencing treatment.

Treatment Details

Treatment is given daily Monday to Friday but not at weekends.

There will be 28 treatments in total, each lasting approximately 10 minutes.

Images will be taken on the linear accelerator to check your position during treatment.

Side Effects

Radiotherapy will affect some of your normal tissues. You may feel tired or nauseated; you will not lose your hair (except in the area being treated). The bladder, rectum (lower bowel), small bowel and testes may be affected.

Rectum (only applies if the rectum has not been surgically removed)

A large area will receive a high dose. This usually results in a temporary inflammation causing you to pass small frequent motions and occasionally blood. Treatment can be given to ease these symptoms during treatment, and they should pass off within a month of completing radiotherapy. **Rarely**, the rectum is damaged permanently and surgery may be required.

Bladder

A small area of the bladder will receive a high dose of radiation, resulting in irritation of the bladder, causing you to pass urine more frequently. Let us know if this happens as we need to exclude an infection. There are some treatments that can ease these symptoms, which should pass off within a month of completing radiotherapy.

Rarely, the bladder is damaged permanently, resulting in the passage of small amounts of blood and an inability to hold onto much urine.

Small bowel

Any small bowel in the radiation field will cause you to have diarrhoea possibly with some cramping abdominal pains. Anti-diarrhoeal medicine can help in this situation. This should pass off within a month of completing radiotherapy. It is unusual to experience any permanent damage.

Skin

The skin may become sore and reddened towards the end of the course of radiotherapy. The radiographers will give you aqueous cream to use daily. Salt baths may be advised. Any itch may need a steroid cream which has to be prescribed. The skin may break down in parts, particularly the skin creases, specific creams and or dressings will be provided by the radiographers to help with this situation. Your skin will be monitored closely during treatment.

Ovaries

The ovaries will be within the radiation beam and are very sensitive to radiation. There will be no effect if you have already gone through the menopause. If you have not, radiotherapy will stop the ovaries from working and cause an early menopause. This means you will be unable to have children and no longer produce the female hormones. HRT can be safely prescribed for you if desired.

Vagina

The radiation treatment can cause the lining of the vagina to become dry and the walls of the vagina to lose their elasticity. This could make sexual relations or physical examination in the future, difficult. You will be offered a discussion about dilators during the radiotherapy, which will explain how these may help to prevent these problems.

Post Radiotherapy

If you need assistance after radiotherapy has finished please contact

Colorectal Nurse Specialist 01803 655890

Macmillan Radiographer 01803 654273

For further information there are booklets available **FREE OF CHARGE FROM**
MACMILLAN-0808 808 00 00- www.macmillan.org.uk