

## 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 itchy parts 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.

## Testes

The testes are close to the radiotherapy beam. It is possible that this could result in sterility but cannot be relied upon as a method of contraception. It is unlikely that the male sex hormone levels of testosterone will be affected by radiotherapy

**Parking Permit:** You will be given a parking permit to use for one of the radiotherapy parking spaces; this has to be returned at the end of radiotherapy

## 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 CANCERBACKUP**, Freephone orderline 0808 800 1234 (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm)



## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

### **Cancer of the Rectum (Male)**

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 accurately. 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 tattoos placed 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 nauseous; 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, occasionally blood is passed. 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.

### **Spinal Cord**

The spinal cord carries the messages from the brain to the rest of the body. Particular care is exercised in the planning stages to ensure that the dose to this structure is kept within safe limits. Damage to the spinal cord is extremely rare.

### **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