

Introduction

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.

In order to enhance the area we need to treat we may need to inject you with a contrast agent just before the scan.

You will have some small 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.

Treatment Details

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

There will be 5-10 treatments in total, each lasting approximately 15 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.

Oesophagus

You may experience difficulty swallowing. There are medications that can help; symptoms should pass off within 2 weeks. The radiographers and dieticians will give advice with regard to a soft diet.

Lungs

The lungs are very sensitive to radiation and it is possible that part of the lungs will be inflamed. However the effect on you should be minimal. It could cause a slight cough or breathlessness.

Skin

The skin may become sore and reddened towards the end of your course of treatment. Moisturising cream should be applied to the area twice daily during radiotherapy. These areas will be monitored by the radiographers during your treatment