



***PATIENT
INFORMATION***

**Cancer of the Anus
(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.

You will also receive chemotherapy during the first and final weeks of your radiotherapy (see chemotherapy for anal cancer)

Once this phase of the radiotherapy is completed your tumour will be assessed to see if it has responded well. If so, a final boost of radiotherapy will be needed (see boost for anal cancer). In the event that radiotherapy has not caused sufficient regression, surgery would be required.

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 or Bank Holidays.

There will be 25 treatments in total, each lasting approximately 10 minutes. This does not include the boost. Extra treatments may be arranged if days are missed because of Bank holidays or machine breakdown.

At least one x-ray will be taken with 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. The bladder, rectum (lower bowel), small bowel and testes may be affected as follows:

Skin

The groin area is very sensitive to radiotherapy and the effect on the skin in this area is very severe. The skin will become sore and reddened towards the end of the course of radiotherapy. E45 can be applied to reddened areas; any itchy parts may need a steroid cream, which has to be prescribed. The skin will break down, particularly the skin creases; specific creams can help this situation. Your skin is closely monitored during treatment. It is likely that the skin will be very sore and broken for up to a month after treatment.

Rectum

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. The anus itself becomes inflamed, causing pain when passing motions. Constipation must be avoided and creams can help. Rarely the treatment causes the anus to be prone to leakage.

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.

Testes

If the testicles 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 very unlikely that the male sex hormone levels (testosterone) will be affected by radiotherapy. The dose to the testicles can be estimated and measured during treatment.

Post radiotherapy

If you need assistance after radiotherapy has finished, please contact any of the following:

Colorectal Nurse Specialist	01803 655890
Macmillan radiographer	01803 654273
Cancer Support Centre	01803 617521

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