

Vagina

The vagina may become smaller as a result of treatment. This may affect those who are sexually active. It may be possible to prevent this; if you need more information please ask your radiographer for advice.

Skin

The skin may become sore and reddened towards the end of the course of radiotherapy. Aqueous cream can be applied to the reddened areas.

Your skin is closely monitored during treatment.

Parking During Radiotherapy

You will be given a parking permit to use in one of the radiotherapy parking spaces; this must be returned to Reception at the end of the course of radiotherapy.

Post Radiotherapy

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

Macmillan Radiographer 01803 654273

Gynaecology Nurse Specialist 01803 654627



***PATIENT
INFORMATION***

Cancer of the Cervix

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.

You will receive both external beam and intracavity radiotherapy.

External beam 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. Intracavity treatment means placing tubes internally. Radioactive pellets then fill the tubes and deliver radiation directly to the area required.

There is a separate information sheet dealing with this.

Arrangements for your Radiotherapy

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.

We will also give an injection of contrast during this scan.

With your consent some small permanent tattoos will be placed on your skin. These are used to help reproduce your position accurately during treatment. If you do not wish to have these then the radiographers will discuss other options plus additional responsibilities on your part to ensure any temporary marks are not lost.

Treatment Details

Treatment is given daily Monday to Friday but not usually at weekends. Extra treatments may be arranged if days are missed due to machine breakdown.

There will be 25 or 28 treatments in total, each lasting approximately 10 minutes.

Using the linear accelerator, x-ray images will be taken frequently during treatment to check on your treatment position.

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 ovaries may be affected as follows:

Rectum

A small area will receive a high dose of radiation. This usually results in a temporary inflammation, causing you to pass small, frequent motions: occasionally blood is passed. Medication 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 marks, 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 medication can help in this situation. This should pass off within a month of completing radiotherapy. Rarely the bowel is weakened such that you may experience bouts of cramping abdominal pains and diarrhoea.

Ovaries

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