

Ovaries -The ovaries may have already been removed, if not, they will be within the radiation beam and are very sensitive. The surgeon sometimes attempts to move the ovaries out of the radiation area, though it is not always possible, or successful. There will be no effect if you have gone through the menopause. If you have not yet gone through the menopause, radiotherapy will stop the ovaries from working and cause an early menopause. This means you will no longer produce the female hormones. HRT can be discussed with you, depending on your type of cancer.

Vagina - The vagina may become narrowed following treatment. This could make future sexual intercourse and pelvic examination difficult. You will be offered a discussion about vaginal dilators to explain how these can help prevent such problems.

Skin - The skin may become sore and reddened towards the end of the course of radiotherapy. A moisturising cream be applied to the reddened areas. The skin may break down in parts; specific gels can help this situation. 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 the Oncology Reception at the end of your course of radiotherapy

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

Gynae Site specific Radiographer 01803 654273

Gynaecology Nurse Specialist 01803 654627

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

PATIENT INFORMATION

Cancer of the Cervix and Endometrium (Post Radical Hysterectomy)

Radiotherapy Information for
Torbay Hospital Patients

Working with you, for you

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 Intra-cavity 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.

Intra-cavity treatment means placing tubes internally. These are then connected to the radioactive source and the radiation is delivered internally. This treatment is delivered in Exeter. A separate Information sheet Brachytherapy treatment for Endometrial (womb) cancer Post hysterectomy is available.

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. 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. Photographs/electronic images will also be acquired, with your consent. These will be kept in your notes.

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 - 28 treatments in total, each lasting approximately 15 minutes

Using the linear accelerator, CT 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, you are unlikely to feel sick and you will not lose your hair.

The bladder, rectum (lower bowel), small bowel, ovaries, (if not removed at operation) and vagina 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. 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 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.