

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 the dose to this structure is kept within safe limits. Damage to the spinal cord is extremely rare.

Ovaries

The ovaries may 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 yet gone through the menopause radiotherapy will stop the ovaries from working and cause an early menopause. This means you may be unable to have children and will no longer produce the female hormones. HRT can be safely prescribed for you if desired. The risk of damage to the ovaries can be estimated if required.

Skin

The skin may become sore and reddened towards the end of the course of radiotherapy. Moisturising cream can be applied to reddened areas. Any itchy areas may need a steroid cream which needs to be prescribed. The skin may break down in parts; specific creams can help this situation. Your skin is closely monitored during treatment.

If you need assistance after radiotherapy has finished please contact the Macmillan Radiographer on **01803 654273**

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

For further information, there are booklets available **FREE of CHARGE** from Macmillan Cancer Support
Free phone 0808 808 00 00 (Mon-to Fri 9am-8pm)

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 Abdominal Organ (Female)

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 a 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

It is very important that we can target the radiotherapy as accurately as possible. A CT planning scan with you lying in the same position as for the radiotherapy itself locates 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 be captured, with your consent. These will be kept in your notes or stored electronically.

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.

Extra treatments may be arranged if days are missed due to machine breakdown.

The number of treatments will depend on the type of tumour but is likely to be 25 or more, each lasting approximately 15 minutes. Occasionally up to 5 extra treatments may be needed at the end.

At least one x-ray will be taken with the linear accelerator during treatment to check on your position.

Side effects

Radiotherapy will affect some of your normal tissues. You may feel tired and nauseated; you will not lose your hair. The small bowel, stomach, kidneys, spinal cord and ovaries may be affected as follows:

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. It is unusual to experience any permanent damage.

Stomach

If a significant amount of stomach is included in the way of the x-ray beams you may feel nauseated, there are a variety of anti-sickness medications that can be tried.

Kidneys

The kidneys are sensitive to radiation. The dose can be limited by shielding the kidneys provided this does not shield the tumour. The function of the kidneys may be assessed prior to radiotherapy.

Irradiation of too much kidney can result in permanent damage or blood pressure problems.