

Useful Royal Sussex County Hospital numbers (see front page for main numbers)

Howard 1 Ward	☎	01273 696955 ext 4051
Worthing Oncology Dept	☎	01903 205111 ext 4225
Eastbourne Oncology Dept	☎	01323 435813
Macmillan Counsellor	☎	01273 664694

For local support groups please speak to a member of staff

Useful National Contacts

Macmillan: www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 00 00

Macmillan benefits helpline: 0808 801 0304

Cancer Help (Cancer Research): 0808 800 4040
www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Sussex Cancer Network: www.sussexcancer.nhs.uk

NHS Patient Choices Website:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/radiotherapy/pages/introduction.aspx

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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If you do not understand this leaflet, we can arrange for an interpreter.

إذا كنت لا تستطيع فهم محتويات هذه النشرة فبإمكاننا عمل الترتيبات لتوفير مترجم شفوي لك.

এই প্রচারপুস্তিকাটি যদি আপনি বুঝতে না পারেন, তবে আপনার জন্য আমরা একজন অনুবাদকের ব্যবস্থা করে দিতে পারি।

如你不明白本單張的內容，我們可安排口譯員服務。

如你不明白本傳單的內容，我們可安排口譯員服務。

اگر مندرجات این جزوه را نمیفهمید، ما می‌توانیم مترجم در اختیارتان بگذاریم.

Jeśli masz trudności w zrozumieniu tej ulotki, możemy zorganizować tłumacza.

Having Radiotherapy at The Sussex Cancer Centre

Information for Patients

BSUH Sussex Cancer Centre
The Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton
www.bsuh.nhs.uk/

Main Reception telephone: 01273 696955 extn. 4324
Radiotherapy reception telephone: 01273 664901
Chemotherapy reception telephone: 01273 664799

We understand that the period immediately after treatment can be a worrying time, especially as your side effects may continue to worsen for a while.

Remember...we are still here to help.

Do not hesitate to call us if you have any concerns.

Other Services at the Sussex Cancer Centre

Complementary Therapies

Complementary therapies, such as Aromatherapy and Massage, are available at the Sussex Cancer Centre. Some free sessions are available to patients attending the centre. Please pick up a leaflet or contact main reception for details.

Macmillan Psychological Therapies

Being diagnosed with cancer and then going through treatment can be very distressing. The Macmillan Psychological Therapies Team provide a range of counselling and psychological therapies for patients and their families. Please feel free to pick up a leaflet, ask a member of staff or call the team directly on the number at the back of this booklet.

What is Radiotherapy?

Many people with cancer will have Radiotherapy as part of their treatment, either on its own or in combination with other treatments like chemotherapy and surgery. Your Oncologist has decided that you will benefit from a course of External Beam Radiotherapy (EBRT). EBRT is when radiation is delivered from outside of the body by a machine called a Linear Accelerator (LA). Radiotherapy can be used to cure some cancers, reduce the chance of the cancer coming back after surgery or to help control and relieve some symptoms of cancer.

Radiotherapy works by destroying the cancer cells in the area being treated. Normal cells in the area can also be damaged during treatment but these cells have the ability to repair themselves. We are aware of the potential dangers of radiation but, when it is carefully prescribed, the risks can be minimised and are outweighed by the benefits.

What happens during Radiotherapy?

You will be treated each day by two specially trained Treatment Radiographers. During each of your treatments the Radiographers will position you on the treatment couch so that you are in the same position as when you had your CT scan. They do this by lining up the permanent marks you were given at your scan with green laser lights in the treatment room. If you have had an immobilisation mask made then the Radiographers will use marks drawn on this to position you instead. It is important that you are in the correct position to ensure accurate treatment. Therefore, the Radiographers may take some time to do this. Try to relax your body as much as possible as this will make it easier for them to position you.

Smoking

Stopping or cutting down smoking during your Radiotherapy is beneficial. It may help reduce some of the unwanted side effects. Please ask for help or advice if required.

How long do the side effects last for?

The radiation will carry on working inside your body after your treatment has finished. Any side effects you are getting may even get slightly worse, or new ones develop, in the first 7 to 10 days following treatment. Carry on treating your skin with care until any reaction has settled down. Be assured that most side effects are temporary and you will gradually feel better. However, please feel free to call and speak to a Radiographer if you have any concerns.

What happens when your Radiotherapy ends?

Follow up arrangements will vary depending on the treatment you have received. These appointments will normally be about 6 to 8 weeks after the treatment ends, allowing time for any side effects to settle down.

You may be given an appointment to see a doctor in the Sussex Cancer Centre or at your local District General Hospital. Some patients will be referred back to their GP, Surgeon or to the Consultant who originally referred them to the Cancer Centre. The Radiographer will inform you on the last day of your treatment where and when your follow up will be. This will be confirmed by a letter in the post.

In the meantime, your GP will receive a letter with the details of the treatment you received and, if necessary, will be able to advise you about any continuing medication.

Once you are in the correct position you will be asked to keep very still. The machine will move around your body but it will not touch you. Radiotherapy machines are not enclosed. You will be left alone in the room while the radiation is being delivered but the Radiographers will be watching you closely on a video camera from just outside the room. External Beam Radiotherapy is completely painless and you will not see or feel anything. Most appointments are approximately 20 minutes long, although this can vary depending on your treatment. Much of this time is taken to position you and move the machine. The treatment itself only takes a few minutes.

What are the side effects to Radiotherapy?

You will not be radioactive during or after your treatment so it is completely safe for you to be around children and pregnant women.

Radiotherapy only affects the area of your body being treated. Therefore, the side effects you may experience will depend on what part of your body you are having treated.

Your Oncologist will have discussed the possible side effects of your particular treatment. The Radiographers treating you can also give you advice on what side effects to expect and how to manage them, so do not hesitate to ask any questions.

Radiotherapy side effects tend not to start straight away but can develop as you go through your treatment. On the next page there are a couple of side effects that are common to most Radiotherapy treatments.

If you are having treatment to your head then use a baby shampoo to wash your hair. People having treatment to the head and neck area should avoid wet shaving, however an electric razor is fine. If you are having the breast area treated then avoid wet shaving the armpit on that side.

We do not advise the use of perfume, aftershave, make-up or talcum powder in the area being treated. Avoid deodorant if we are treating near your armpit, such as for radiotherapy to the breast area. Please ask if you are unsure.

Avoid exposing the area being treated to the sun both during and for at least a year after your treatment has finished. You may find that this area of skin will always be more sensitive to the sun after you have had treatment so make sure you use a high factor sun cream or cover up.

Try to avoid wearing tight clothing against the area being treated as this can cause friction and may make any skin reaction worse.

Loose cotton underwear is recommended if you are having your pelvic area treated. If you are having your breast area treated a cotton non-underwired bra is advisable. If you are having your neck area treated avoid tight collars and ties.

It is ok to go swimming if your skin is unbroken. However, be aware that the chemicals in the pool may add to the drying effect on your skin. Make sure you shower well and moisturise the skin with the creams previously recommended. Please ask if you are unsure.

Common side effects

Tiredness

It is normal to feel tired whilst you are having your Radiotherapy treatment. This can be due to a combination of the treatment itself and travelling to and from the hospital each day. Do carry on your daily life as normal but listen to your body. Rest if necessary and do not be afraid to accept offers of help from friends and family if needed. Keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids (up to 2 litres a day). Many people find some gentle exercise also helps, such as a short walk outside.

Skin Reaction

Radiotherapy can cause some people to develop a skin reaction in the treated area. The degree of this reaction can depend on the area being treated, the radiation dose being given as well as individual factors. Some people have no reaction at all but for other people the skin reaction can be quite pronounced.

You may notice that the skin reddens or becomes darker. It can also become tender, dry or itchy. The Radiographers treating you will monitor your skin during treatment. You should let them know if it is becoming sore as they will be able to give you further advice or arrange for you to see a skin care specialist.

How can I look after my skin during Radiotherapy?

We recommend that you use Aqueous Cream or E45 Cream to moisturise the area being treated. These are both easily available from any chemist.

You can wash the treatment area while you are having Radiotherapy but we advise you to use tepid water, unperfumed soaps and gently pat the area dry. You can wash as you would normally everywhere else.