

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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carer and patient information group approved

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

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

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

如你不懂白本單張的內容，我們可安排口譯員服務。

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

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

Information for patients receiving Radiotherapy to the Skin

The Sussex Cancer Centre

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

Everyone needs some support during difficult times and you should not hesitate to ask for help during or after your treatment has finished. Feel free and safe to discuss any issues with your Doctor, the Radiographers or key worker.

If they are not able to answer your questions they will be able to refer you to a health professional/counsellor who can help. **This will only be done with your permission.**

Do not feel concerned that the staff appear to be busy. **We are here to care for you.**

Follow up appointments

Most patients will be given an appointment for 6-8 weeks after treatment ends to see their Oncologist or GP. This will be at The Sussex Cancer Centre, your local District General Hospital or GP surgery.

The Radiographers will let you know when and where at your last treatment and it will be confirmed by letter. In the meantime your GP will receive a letter giving details of your treatment and if you need any continuing medication you should contact your surgery.

Why is Radiotherapy given?

Your Oncologist, who is the specialist cancer doctor, has recommended that you have a course of Radiotherapy treatment. The aim is to destroy the cancer cells in the area we are treating.

Your treatment will be planned and delivered by a team of specialists called Treatment Radiographers, who are also there to support you and give you any information during treatment.

How many treatments will I need and how often?

The number of treatments and the way in which we give the treatment varies between patients. Your treatment will be planned to suit your individual needs. The treatment can be given Monday to Friday of each week for between one and six weeks.

How is the treatment area located?

The exact position of your treatment will be decided by the Oncologist who will draw some marks onto your skin. The Radiographers will then take some photographs and measurements to enable them to treat you accurately each day.

How long will the treatment location take?

Please allow approximately 20-30 minutes for this session.

Once the treatment has finished

The treatment area may become red and sore. This reaction will reach its peak about 10 days after your treatment has finished. Continue to treat your skin with care until the reaction has settled down. This will normally be between 6 and 8 weeks. If your nose has been treated you may get some crusting within the nose or the occasional nosebleed. You should continue to use the creams recommended for at least a couple of weeks after your treatment. If your skin becomes broken or starts to weep don't worry, this is a normal reaction. If you are concerned you should make an appointment with your GP or contact us for an appointment with our skin care nurse. The area will form a crust or scab which will peel away when the skin underneath is almost healed. Try not to disturb the scab.

Long Term Side effects

At first, the new skin will look pinker or darker than the skin around it. This will gradually fade. Although it can eventually be slightly paler in colour.

Support during treatment

Each day, you will have the opportunity to speak to the Radiographers, who will also monitor your skin and assess your well being. You may request to see a Doctor during treatment if you need further advice.

If you don't understand what is happening to you please ask on the Radiographers to explain more clearly.

Treatment

How is my treatment given?

Most patients having treatment to the skin will be treated on a machine called a Gulmay or superficial unit. However some patients may have treatment on a machine called a Linear Accelerator. The type of treatment will be decided by your Oncologist and will depend on individual factors.

How long will the treatment take?

Although the actual treatment will only take a few minutes, you will be in the treatment room for a total of 10-15 minutes. Most of this time will be used by the Radiographers to ensure that you and the machine are in the correct position.

Do I need to undress?

Only if the area we need to treat is under your garments.

Will I be alone in the room?

Although you will be alone in the room when the machine is switched on, the Radiographers can see you on a video monitor the whole time. During this time you will be asked to lie as still as possible on the treatment couch and breathe normally.

Will the treatment be painful?

An applicator is attached to the machine and this will rest on your skin but this will not be uncomfortable or painful. During the treatment you will not feel anything. The machine will make a buzzing noise while it is giving the treatment.

Skin Care

During radiotherapy treatment it is quite normal for your skin to become dry, itchy or tender and you may notice some redness. The Radiographers will monitor your skin on a daily basis. Please keep to the following advice from the first day of treatment until two weeks after the treatment, or for longer if symptoms persist.

Swimming

It is ok to go swimming, but 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. If the skin is broken we do not recommend swimming.

Heat and cold

Do not place hot water bottles or hot/cold pads on the area being treated.

Diet

There are no special dietary requirements, but you should try to maintain a healthy and balanced diet.

Exposure to the Sun

Most skin cancers are caused by exposure to the sun so safe sun exposure is very important.

Your skin in the area being treated will be more sensitive to the sun. Protect this area from the sun both during and after treatment. It is important that you use sun block once your reaction has settled down.

You need to protect all of your skin, not just the treated area. You can use sunscreen daily instead of a moisturiser or use a moisturiser that contains a high factor sunscreen. The use of hats and clothing also help keep the skin out of the sun.

You can get advice on protecting your skin during hot weather from the Cancer Research UK Sun Smart campaign website at <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/healthyliving/sunsmart/>

Clothing

Wear natural fabrics such as cotton or silk next to the skin which is being treated. Tight fitting clothes may rub so wear loose clothing. If you wear glasses, which might rub the treatment area, try not to wear them all the time.

Washing

Once your radiotherapy has begun, wash the skin in the treatment area gently. Use tepid water. Use unperfumed, Simple or a baby soap and make sure that you rinse it off completely. Pat the skin dry with a soft towel. Do not rub the skin in the treated area as this will make the skin more red and tender.

If you have a bath please make sure the water is not too hot and do not use any products in the bath such as bubble bath. Do not soak the treated area in the bath for too long.

Creams and lotions

We recommend that you use Aqueous Cream or E45 on the treated area. It is important that you do not apply any other lotions, creams, make-up, powder or perfume in the treatment area as it may irritate the skin.

If you already have a pre-existing skin condition in the area to be treated, e.g. Psoriasis or Eczema, please inform a Radiographer and we will arrange for you to see our skin specialist nurse.

If the skin becomes moist or broken please stop putting any cream on the area and we will arrange for you to see our skin specialist nurse. If itching becomes unpleasant an alternative cream can be prescribed.

Should I keep the area covered?

Do not cover the treatment area with any dressings unless told otherwise. If you think the treated area needs a dressing then please ask the Radiographer who is treating you.

Shaving

If you are being treated in the head and neck area you should use an electric razor and avoid after-shave lotion. Please do not wet shave or use any form of hair removal over any area being treated.