

Kent Oncology Centre
**Radiotherapy Side Effects and
Management: Prostate Cancer**
Information for patients

We hope this leaflet will help you understand the side effects that may occur when having external radiotherapy to the prostate. It also explains the best management of these side effects. If you would like to speak to one of the radiotherapy team please feel free to contact them on the numbers given below:

Macmillan Urology Radiographers  07703 971991

Macmillan Radiotherapy Specialists  01622 225094

Maidstone Hospital

Appointment enquiries  01622 225080

Kent & Canterbury Hospital

Appointment enquiries  01227 783010

You will be given a copy of our leaflet 'External Beam Radiotherapy' which we advise you to read alongside this leaflet. Our leaflets can also be found on the **Kent Oncology Centre website:** www.kentoncologycentre.nhs.uk

You will also be able to view a short film showing prostate radiotherapy on the website or search www.youtube.com for 'Kent Oncology'.

Side effects of external radiotherapy to the prostate

Some side effects may occur, usually towards the end of the course of treatment and also during the first few weeks after treatment has finished. Treatments given over several weeks give more side effects than a short course of treatment.

These side effects can be upsetting and may require you to make some adjustments to your normal life, but most are temporary and will gradually disappear after a few weeks. However, some side effects may continue for, and some may only become apparent after, months or years following treatment. It is important to discuss these with your consultant as help may be available. Radiotherapy does not make you radioactive; it is safe to be with other people, including children, throughout your treatment.

Short term side effects

You will be monitored throughout your treatment by the radiotherapy team and a Macmillan radiographer. Please let them know if you experience any of the following problems:

Tiredness

You may find that you become more tired as your treatment continues. This is very common with radiotherapy and you may need more rest than usual, especially if you have to travel a long way for treatment every day. It is good to try to get some exercise each day, however gentle.

Bowel effects

Radiotherapy to the prostate can cause irritation and inflammation of the bowel. This usually settles down about two to three weeks after radiotherapy treatment ends. Drinking plenty of fluids and altering your diet may help. Occasionally medication may be required.

Inflammation of the back passage (proctitis)

Proctitis can cause a feeling of wanting to strain whether or not you actually need to pass a bowel movement, and bleeding from your back passage (rectum). Bleeding is usually only slight. You may also have a slimy mucous discharge from your rectum.

Bladder irritation

Radiotherapy to the prostate often irritates the bladder. You may feel as if you have cystitis (a bladder infection), notice a reduced flow and hesitancy, and want to pass urine all the time but when you go you pass very little. You may feel a burning pain when you do pass urine. Try to drink plenty of fluids. Tell the radiotherapy team if you experience any of these. Any bladder irritation should settle down a few weeks after treatment. If you are unable to pass any urine you need to go to your nearest Emergency Care Centre or A&E.

Sexual function (impotence)

Radiotherapy to the prostate can damage the nerves that control an erection, making it more difficult to achieve and maintain an erection. The risk is increased for those who are also having hormone treatment. There are various treatments that can help. If you would like more information please discuss this with your Macmillan Radiographer who can arrange for you to attend a Wellman Clinic.

Skin changes

Skin reactions in the treatment area should be very mild. There could be slight redness and itching. Tips for helping your skin include:

- Wash the skin gently using soap or aqueous cream and gently pat dry.
 - Wear loose fitting natural fibre clothing next to the skin.
 - Avoid heating and cooling pads/ice.
 - Avoid hair removal products.
 - Avoid adhesive tape.
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After finishing treatment you may be aware of a skin reaction developing for up to another two weeks. Continue with the suggested skin care tips, returning gradually to your usual skin care regime when your skin has returned to normal.

Hair loss

This only occurs in the area being treated.

Still smoking?

Smoking during treatment will reduce the success of your treatment. Please ask for help if this is a problem for you

Long term side effects

These side effects may be permanent and can include:

- Frequent bowel movements and diarrhoea, which may require an alteration to your diet, medication or, very rarely, a referral to a specialist
- Bladder shrinkage causing you to pass urine more often
- Small amounts of blood in your urine and stools
- Difficulty getting an erection. If this is a problem your Macmillan radiographer can arrange for you to attend a Wellman Clinic.
- Loss of fertility – this will be permanent; if this is an issue for you please discuss sperm banking with your consultant before having your radiotherapy treatment

If you have concerns about any continuing side effects please inform your consultant.

Please use this space to write any notes or questions you may have.



Further information and advice can be obtained from:

Kent Oncology Macmillan Cancer Information Centre, Maidstone Hospital

Offers support and information to anyone who has concerns about cancer (patients, relatives, friends or carers).

☎ 01622 227064

Macmillan Cancer Support

Provide practical, medical and financial information

☎ 0808 808 0000 (free phone)

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Cancer Research

This charity provides information about cancer, treatment and clinical trials.

☎ 0808 800 4040

Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Patient Experience Teams (PALS) for East Kent patients

Kent and Canterbury Hospital

Desk at the outpatient's entrance of the hospital

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital

Office at the main entrance of the hospital (Ramsgate Road)

William Harvey Hospital

Desk at the main entrance of the hospital

☎ 01227 783145 or 01227 864314

Email: ekh-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

*The information in this leaflet has been taken from information provided by Cancer Research UK, Macmillan Cancer Support and Society of Radiographers.

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

Issue date: November 2015
Database reference: RWF-OPLF-PCS62

Review date: November 2018
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