

Prophylactic cranial radiotherapy

Information for patients with lung cancer

Introduction

Your doctor has advised you to have a course of radiotherapy to the brain, known as **prophylactic cranial radiotherapy**. Chemotherapy does not enter the brain very well, so patients with small cell lung cancer are at risk of the disease coming back in the brain at some time in the future. Radiotherapy to the brain can reduce this risk. This information leaflet is designed to advise you of what to expect before, during and after treatment.

Your radiotherapy

Radiotherapy is the use of high energy X-rays to destroy cancer cells while doing as little harm as possible to normal cells. The treatment is **painless** and you will not see or feel anything whilst the treatment is being delivered.

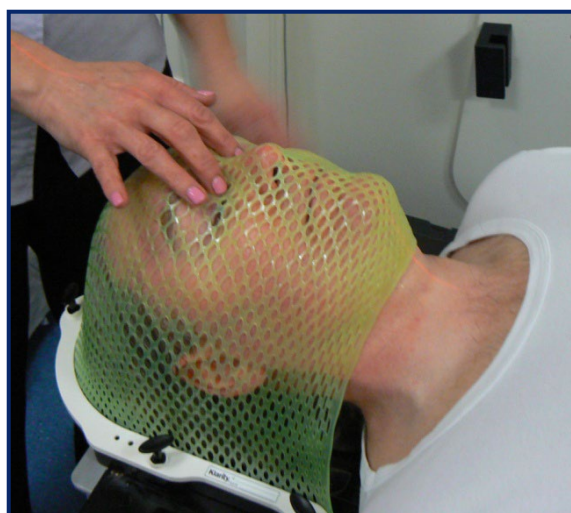
There are usually between **5 and 10 treatments**, one each week day, over one or two weeks. Your doctor will discuss with you how many treatments are needed. Each treatment only takes a few minutes but there can be a short wait in the department before you are taken. You will be positioned on the bed the same way you were when your mask was made, and the machine will move around you to treat from each side

How is it done?

You will receive an appointment through the post to attend the radiotherapy department. On the first day you will have an appointment for the Mould room where a special plastic mask is made to cover your face and head (pictured).

This helps to keep your head still during the treatment and allows us to draw marks on the mask, rather than on your skin. Some people can find this uncomfortable and a little restrictive. Speak to your radiographer or nurse if you have any concerns.

You will then be taken to the CT scanner where the radiographer will mark on the shell the area to be treated. This may take about 10 minutes. Your treatment may start the same day. If this is the case then you will have to wait about 30 minutes for some calculations to be made. The radiographer will then take you to the treatment machine. Alternatively, your treatment may start in a few days.



The treatment machine will move around you to the start position and the radiographers will leave the room to treat. Although you will be alone in the room, the radiographers monitor you the whole time by CCTV cameras. When the machine is on it will move around you in a circle, you will hear a buzzing noise, but feel nothing. The radiographers may adjust your position from outside the room, so if you feel the couch move occasionally, this is normal. The radiotherapy is painless but it does have some side-effects.

What are the side effects?

The treatment will cause hair loss and sometimes it may take a few months to start to re-grow, and it may come back quite patchy. Your scalp may become a little red and itchy, especially around the ears. We can give you some cream to soothe this if it occurs.

You should keep your head covered if you go out in strong sunlight during your treatment and for a few months afterwards.

Occasionally the treatment can cause nausea. If this happens, please let us know and we can provide medication to help with this.

Some patients notice a slight hearing loss after treatment due to a build-up of fluid in the middle ear. This normally settles after a few weeks but if it persists, let your nurse or Oncologist know.

The radiotherapy can also make you feel tired, especially if you have been receiving chemotherapy as well.

Will it affect my brain?

There have been a number of studies comparing patients who have had radiotherapy to the brain and those who have not. Some patients do complain of difficulty in concentrating and a worsening of memory. If you are concerned about this, please speak to your Oncologist.

Your progress

You will be assessed by a nurse every week during radiotherapy. Once your radiotherapy is completed, you will receive an appointment to see your Oncologist approximately 6 weeks after your treatment. This is to check that you are recovering from the side effects of your treatment.

Support

- You can contact your lung cancer nurse for support and advice during office hours Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm. You may need to leave a message but they will get back to you.
- If you have any problems during your treatment or up to 6 weeks after, you can call this number when you need out of hours help and advice:
Cancer Treatment Helpline - 0800 917 7711
- **If you would like help to stop smoking, free** advice is available from:
Quit Your Way - 0800 84 84 84 - or from your local pharmacist or GP.

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