

Palliative Radiotherapy for Bone Metastases

Information for patients

Your clinician has advised you to have a course of radiotherapy treatment to help your symptoms. This leaflet explains what the treatment involves.

What are bone metastases?

Bone metastases are secondary cancers in the bones. They are deposits of cancer cells that have spread from the primary tumour into bone. The symptoms may include pain, swelling and tenderness in the affected area.

What will radiotherapy do?

The aim of the radiotherapy to the bone is to relieve any symptoms, especially pain, and make you more comfortable.

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy uses 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. Your radiotherapy may be given as a single dose or divided into a number of sessions. Your clinician will talk to you about how many treatments are most appropriate for you.

What can I do to prepare for my appointment?

You may be in the department for up to 3 hours, so:

- wear comfortable loose-fitting clothing
- **bring any regular medications, including painkillers**
- bring a snack or money for the café.

What happens in the radiotherapy department?

Treatment planning

You will have a planning scan on a CT scanner. You will be asked to lie still on the CT couch. You should breathe normally. A scan will be done and the radiographers and your clinician will take measurements required to plan your treatment accurately. Pen marks will be drawn on to the skin to indicate the area to be treated.

If you are having more than one treatment, we will ask your permission to make a small permanent mark. This involves a pin prick.



Planning CT scanner

Treatment delivery

For the treatment, you will be asked to lie on the treatment couch in the same position you were in for the planning scan. The radiographers will leave the room while the radiotherapy is delivered, but they can see you on CCTV. You will be asked to lie still while the treatment machine moves around you and delivers x-rays. It will take a few minutes.

Occasionally, treatment starts the same day as the scan. If so, there will be a wait of up to 3 hours while we calculate and check your radiotherapy plan. Otherwise, your treatment will start within a few days as detailed on your appointment letter.



What are the side-effects of radiotherapy?

- You may feel tired and this can last for several weeks after treatment.
- Radiotherapy can sometimes cause pain to worsen temporarily, requiring additional painkillers.

If you take regular painkillers please bring them with you.

- The skin overlying the area can become inflamed or itchy. Wash with simple, non-perfumed soap. Staff will advise you on moisturisers. Loose clothing may be more comfortable.
- Treating certain areas of the body can cause nausea. If this is likely, you will be given anti-sickness tablets.
- Radiotherapy does not make you radioactive. You do not need to restrict contact with children or pregnant women.

What happens next?

It may take 2-3 weeks for the radiotherapy to begin to reduce the pain and it can take several weeks before it achieves its full effect. It is therefore important that you continue with any painkillers during this time.

Most patients are seen in clinic 4-6 weeks after completing radiotherapy to assess their response to treatment. During this time you should report any concerns about your symptoms to the Cancer Treatment Helpline.

Contact details

If you have any further queries about your treatment, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Cancer Treatment Helpline

If you have any problems during your treatment, or up to 8 weeks after, you can call the Cancer Treatment Helpline on **0800 9217 7711** for advice. This is a 24 hour service.

Patient Transport

Booking-line: 03000 13 4000 (option1, option1)

