

# Palliative Radiotherapy to Skin (Electrons)

## Information for patients

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

### What are skin metastases?

Cancers can start in other parts of the body and spread to skin, causing lumps or ulceration. These are skin metastases, or secondary skin cancers. The symptoms caused by skin metastases can be treated with radiotherapy.

### What will radiotherapy do?

The aim of treatment is to relieve symptoms such as pain, bleeding or local irritation.

### What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the use of high energy electrons 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 in 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.

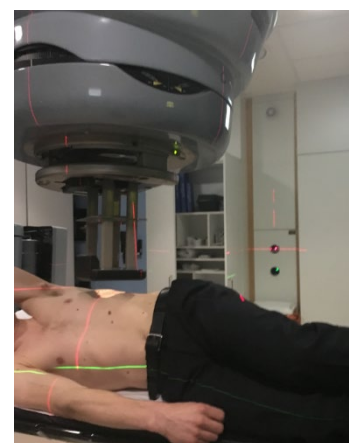
### What happens in the radiotherapy department?

#### Treatment planning

Your clinician may require you to have another CT scan to help with planning your treatment. After this scan you will be taken to a treatment machine where your clinician and the radiographers will position you for treatment. If you do not need a CT you will be directed straight to the treatment machine.

Pen marks will be drawn onto the skin to indicate the area to be treated.

If you are having more than one treatment, we may cover the pen marks with a waterproof dressing. It is important to try and keep these marks on while you are on treatment.



*Set up on a treatment machine (linear accelerator)*

Parts of the machine will come very close to the area being treated, and may even press lightly onto your skin. The radiographers may also cover the area with a gel patch. Once the clinician is happy with the setup the radiographers will record the position and you will be free to go home. It will take a day or two to plan the treatment so you will have appointments to come back the next day or so.

### **Treatment Delivery**

When you come for treatment, the radiographers will position you just as you were during the planning session. When they are ready, they will leave the room while the radiotherapy is delivered, but they can see you on CCTV. It will just take a minute or so to deliver the treatment, and you will just hear a buzzing sound. You will not feel anything, the treatment is painless.

What are the side-effects of radiotherapy?

- Your skin in the treatment area may turn a little pink, feel warm to the touch, and itch. This doesn't normally happen immediately but can develop after a few days or weeks. It is temporary and settles over the course of a couple of weeks.

You can help yourself by:

- wearing loose-fitting clothes to help your skin breathe
- washing with luke warm water and un-perfumed soaps
- avoiding any additional product on the area. Your radiographer will give you advice on a simple moisturiser if required.

Radiotherapy can also cause tiredness that can last several weeks.

### **What happens next?**

It may take 2-3 weeks for the radiotherapy to begin to improve symptoms and it can take several weeks before it achieves its full effect. It is therefore important that you continue with any painkillers and follow advice, if given, regarding skin care.

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 6 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)

