

## Having radiotherapy to a bony area

Your doctor has recommended that you have radiotherapy to a bony area. The aim of the treatment is to reduce pain and/or prevent progression of disease. Response to treatment can vary with some people reporting improvement in their pain very early while others can take up to six weeks before getting the maximum benefit of the treatment. The treatment will usually be given over a short period of time and might only require one treatment attendance.

Often the doctor will have discussed the treatment plan with you so that it suits your needs. Your doctor will have explained how the treatment is given and what side effects (if any) you might have. The aim and side effects of treatment are listed in a consent form that you will be asked to sign. You can change your mind about having treatment at any time.

### Treatment

There will be a planning session before you can receive any treatment. Usually this will be a CT scan, but sometimes the doctor will mark the area for treatment in a clinic room with a radiographer. The treatment will usually be made ready within a week, but in some cases will be prepared for delivery the same day.

Each treatment appointment lasts between 10 and 20 minutes. You will be alone in the room for a few minutes while the radiotherapy machine is switched on. The radiographers can see and hear you at all times when you are in the room. If you have any problems, they will advise you to call out or raise your hand for attention and they will come in to help you. You can hear a buzzing noise as the treatment is delivered but you will not be able to feel anything happening.

**Please see our policy on monitoring in radiotherapy in The Royal Marsden booklet *Radiotherapy; your questions answered*.**

### Side effects

- **Tiredness** – many patients feel tired and this may increase because of pain or travelling.
- **Increased pain** – you may experience increased pain in the area treated. This is temporary. Keep taking your pain medication regularly and use any breakthrough support if you have been given it. Tell the treatment team if your usual pain relief is not enough.
- **Skin** - your skin in the treatment area may become a little sore and get pink or get darker in colour. It may also feel itchy. Try to avoid rubbing it and avoid extremes of temperature. Do not use icepacks or heat pads. Do not soak the area in a hot bath. Continue to be gentle with the area until the skin has returned to normal. You can use a light moisturising cream if the skin feels dry.



## Less common side effects

- **Nausea and vomiting** – you may experience this if you are having treatment to a large area of your spine. If your doctor thinks the treatment might cause sickness, they will prescribe medication that you should take before the radiotherapy.
- **Diarrhoea** – you may experience this if the treatment is to your lower back or pelvis. You can take anti-diarrhoeal medication such as Imodium if you need to.
- **Pain when swallowing** – this may occur if we are treating the bony areas in your neck or chest.
- **Sore mouth** – this can occur if we are treating your face or high neck area.

These side effects may be reduced by drinking plenty of fluids and taking enough rest. All the side effects are temporary. Tell the radiographers if you experience any of these side effects or have new symptoms. They can make sure that you receive the support and any medication you may need. We recommend that you continue all your usual activities as much as you are able, unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

### Additional information

Further information can be found in The Royal Marsden booklet: ***Radiotherapy; your questions answered.***

Other supporting services available are described in The Royal Marsden booklet ***Your guide to support, practical help and therapies.***

The Royal Marsden Help Centre for PALS and Patient Information can provide further general information and support.

Chelsea: 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton: 020 8661 3759 / 020 8661 3951

## Contact details

Please contact us if you have further questions about your treatment.

**The Royal Marsden switchboard:** 020 7352 8171

Please ask to speak to your consultant's secretary (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

Your consultant is \_\_\_\_\_

Alternatively, please call:

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:** 020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

If you need to change your radiotherapy appointments, please phone the radiotherapy bookings team on 020 8915 6018 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

