

Bone palliation therapy

Your doctor has recommended that you are given a treatment in nuclear medicine for your bone pain also known as Radium-223 or Xofigo.

How does this treatment work?

This treatment is used to relieve pain in your bones caused by cancer. The treatment uses a small amount of radiation combined with a medicine, which will target the areas causing pain. Radium-223 is a radiopharmaceutical that behaves in a similar way to calcium and targets cancer cells in the bone.

Before your treatment

Before your treatment is booked, you will have an appointment with a doctor and discuss the treatment that is being offered to you. We will ask you what current medication you are taking, including dietary supplements. In addition, please let us know if you have any problems passing urine or are incontinent, as we will need to give you special instructions.

The doctor will assess your medical history including the treatment you have received before, and all scan results you may have had. A recent bone scan is necessary before you can start the treatment to serve as a baseline, if you have not had one recently, we can organize this for you.

This appointment will give an opportunity to discuss any concerns.

If you consent to have this treatment, you will be asked to sign a consent form, and the treatment will be booked for you.

This treatment is given as a course of 6 injections, at four-week intervals.

How is the treatment given?

We will book you an outpatient appointment in the Nuclear Medicine Department. On the day of your appointment, you will have a blood test to make sure that you are fit for treatment. Following this, we will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. The treatment is given as a small injection in a vein in your arm or hand. Once this has been done, you are free to leave the hospital.

Are there any side effects?

There are some risks short-term after receiving this injection.

- Disease “flare” can cause some discomfort and/or pain.
- Diarrhoea



- Feeling and being sick
- Bone fractures
- Reactions at the site of the injection, such as redness, pain and swelling
- Changes in blood test results

Please feel free to discuss them with your doctor if you have any concerns.

The treatment that we inject will not make you drowsy and so will not prevent you from driving. Some patients experience an increase in their bone pain for up to three days following treatment. If this happens, we advise you to take extra pain medication and tell your doctor if it continues.

Occasionally, some patients may develop anaemia several weeks after treatment. Therefore, we will ask you to have a blood test six weeks after the injection. This may be repeated later if necessary. This will be monitored by your doctor.

How long will it take to work?

The treatment takes some time to be fully absorbed and so it may take a few weeks for you to feel the benefits. For this reason, we recommend that you continue taking any pain medication as normal for as long as you need.

After your treatment

You can continue to take any medication that has been prescribed for you by your doctor. In addition, it is safe for you to take 'over the counter' medicines.

In the first 24 hours following the treatment, a small amount of the radiation given to you will be excreted through your urine. You will not notice this, but it is important that you take extra care when using the toilet for the week following treatment:

- Flush the toilet twice after use
- Wipe up any spilled urine with tissue and dispose of / flush away
- Sit on the toilet every time using it, including when voiding the bladder.
- Wash any bed linen or clothes that become contaminated with urine, separately
- Avoid very close contact with small children and babies (such as sitting on your lap for prolonged periods)
- Avoid close contact with pregnant individuals.

Who will be responsible for my treatment/care?

Your care will be under joint work between Nuclear Medicine team at Royal Marsden and you Oncologist/Urologist.

Following each injection, you will have a blood test and be seen by your urologist/oncologist consultant who will decide whether you are fit to continue with the next radium injection.



Contact details

If you have any queries or further questions, please contact us:

Sutton: 020 8661 3286 / 3287

Chelsea: 020 7811 8541

Alternatively, please contact:

The Royal Marsden Hotline: 020 8915 6899

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

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.



NHS