

Having a shell (or mask) made for radiotherapy

When you have radiotherapy, it is important to be in the same position for the planning and for the entire course of radiotherapy. This will ensure that the treatment is given to exactly the right area. Wearing a radiotherapy shell helps to keep you in the correct position during your treatment.

Who makes the shell and where is it made?

The shells are made by radiographers in the Pre-Treatment area of the Radiotherapy Department. This may be either in the Mould Room or in the CT scanner.

How is the shell made?

The shells are made of a thermoplastic material. This is a type of plastic that is firm at room temperature but becomes soft and flexible when warmed. This enables the radiographers to create a personalised mask of the area we are treating. The shells have clips that attach to the treatment couch to keep you in the correct position for your treatment.

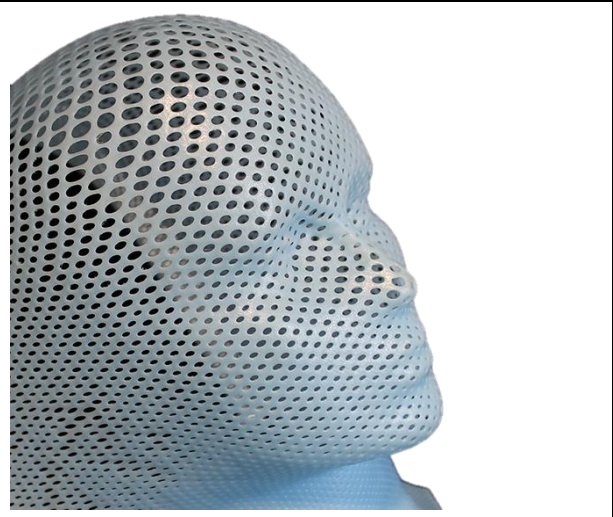


Image provided with kind permission from CIVCO Radiotherapy.

When you are having the shell made, the staff will ask you to lie on the scanner bed in the position required for treatment. Additional supports can be used to make you more comfortable.

The shell is warmed to become soft and flexible and is placed on to the part of the body being treated. The shell takes up to 10 minutes to become firm again. During this time, you will feel the staff moulding the shell to the shape of your body. If the shell covers your face, you will be able to breathe normally through the holes in the shell. The type of shell you will need depends on the part of the body that is being treated.

<p>Head only</p> <p>This shell is used if you are having treatment to your brain or other parts of your head.</p>	
<p>Head and neck</p> <p>This shell is used if you are having radiotherapy to your head and neck. This may also be used if you are having only the neck treated, or for treatments to the upper spine and chest.</p>	
<p>Arm or leg</p> <p>This shell helps you to keep your arm or leg in the correct position. This will normally cover your lower arm or lower leg, even if the upper arm or leg is the target.</p>	

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The staff will check the shell to make sure it is a good fit and comfortable by taking it off and then placing it back in position. It is important that the shell is close fitting to ensure your radiotherapy can be delivered safely and accurately. However, if it is too uncomfortable you should tell the radiographers and they may be able to adjust it for you.

Contact details

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

If you have any questions or concerns about this information, please phone:

Pre-treatment radiographers, Sutton: 0208 661 3564

Pre-treatment radiographers, Chelsea: 0207 811 8467

