

Making a lead cut-out mask

In preparation for your radiotherapy treatment we will need to make a lead cut-out mask. We will do this at your next appointment before you start your radiotherapy, so that we can take an impression of your face which we can use to make the mask.

Why do I need a lead cut-out mask?

Radiotherapy treatment is used to destroy cancer cells. It can also damage healthy cells. Because x-rays cannot penetrate lead, the mask protects the healthy skin. The cut out area (hole) in the mask corresponds exactly to the area to be treated and allows the radiotherapy to be accurately delivered.

Where do I have this done and by whom?

The mask is made by a member of the radiotherapy staff in the mould room near to the Outpatient Department.

How is the mask made?

- The area to be treated is marked with a pen by your doctor. We can then decide if we can use a pre-made lead mask or if a personalised mask is needed.
- If a pre-made lead mask is chosen, we will take some photographs and measurements in preparation for your treatment. We will then arrange when to start your radiotherapy.

If a personalised mask needs to be made, then we will follow the process described below.

N.b. Sometimes extra lead shielding is needed behind the area to be treated to protect underlying tissue, for example, nose, eyes or gums. This is usually a small piece of coated lead that is placed in position before the external mask is made.

How we make the mask



- First, we will cover any hair in the area with gel to avoid the alginate mixture sticking to it.





- An alginate paste is mixed and applied to your face, leaving open areas for your mouth and/or nose so that you can breathe.



- The paste is thick and does not run into your eyes. It dries in less than two minutes to form a rubbery texture and will feel cold.

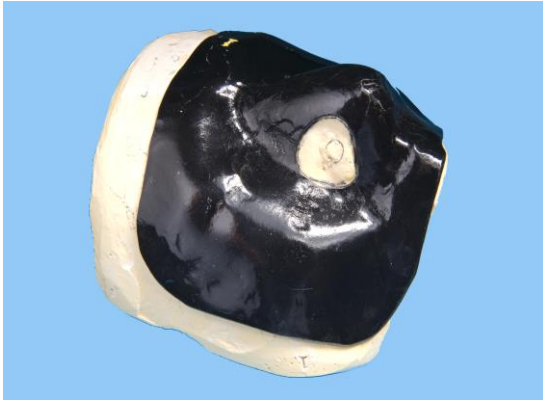


- Wet strips of plaster of Paris bandage are then layered on top of the alginate to reinforce it. These will dry and harden quickly and may feel warm.



- The impression of your face and the area for treatment is gently lifted off. We will clean away any gel or markings from your face and you will be able to leave the department.
- The impression we have made is then filled with plaster to make a model of your face.





- A piece of lead will be moulded to the model with the area to be treated cut away.
- Finally, we will have a custom-made lead mask which fits perfectly to your face. You will need to wear the mask during each of your radiotherapy treatment sessions.

Contact details

If you have any questions about this procedure you can contact:

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Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

