

After you finish your long course radiotherapy treatment

This leaflet explains how to manage some common side effects after your treatment; not all of these side effects will apply to you.

Any side effects from radiotherapy (e.g. for those having the pelvis treated, bladder irritation, loose bowels. For head and neck areas, sore mouth, pain on swallowing etc) that you have experienced can continue, or even become slightly worse, in the week or two after finishing treatment. This is normal and your symptoms will gradually improve over the next few weeks.

Skin changes

Your skin will remain sensitive due to the effects of radiotherapy for several weeks after you have completed your treatment. Please continue to be gentle with the skin in the treatment area until it returns to normal.

If your skin is not broken

- You can resume using your usual skincare products once the skin reaction has settled.

If your skin is broken

- Please follow the advice you have been given about dressings and skin care.

Sun exposure

We recommend that you avoid exposing the treated area to direct sunlight and use a high factor (SPF 30 or above) sun block for at least one year after radiotherapy treatment. In the future your skin may show an uneven reaction to UV light in the area that the radiotherapy was given. It is advisable to avoid deliberate sunbathing or sun bed use for this reason.

Pain

If the treatment has caused pain, such as when you swallow, you should continue to take any medication prescribed until you return for your follow-up. When you attend your last clinic appointment at the end of your treatment the clinician you see will give you advice about any medicines you're taking.

Fatigue

You may feel extremely tired for some time after the end of radiotherapy treatment. Your energy levels will gradually improve over weeks, or even months. Please allow yourself time to recover and to slowly return to your usual activities.



Sleep disturbance

If you have had your brain treated, you can have sleep disturbance 4 to 6 weeks after completion of the radiotherapy. At this time, you may find that you're awake at night and sleepy during the day. This is temporary and will settle again.

Other advice

Diet

If we advised you to avoid certain foods and/ or alcohol during your radiotherapy, please continue to do so for at least 2 weeks. After that, you can gradually start to return to your normal diet.

Well-being

It is common to experience a change in your well-being after a course of radiotherapy has finished. This can happen as your focus changes from attending each day, to getting back to 'normal life.'

The hospital offers many kinds of support, available through your CNS, Maggie's Cancer Centre or on-line. Some complementary therapies through the occupational therapy team. Please do ask if there is anything we can help you with.

When will I get the results of my treatment?

Radiotherapy can keep working for several weeks after the course of treatment has finished.

It is normal to wait at least a few weeks or months before any further tests or scans are arranged for you. Your oncologist or key worker/clinical nurse specialist (CNS) will discuss the precise plans for your follow-up care with you.

What should I do if I feel unwell in the next few weeks?

If you feel unwell or develop new symptoms before your next appointment, you can contact your key worker/CNS or the oncology team (through your consultant's secretary).

If you have medical concerns out of hours you should phone the Royal Marsden Hotline 0208 915 6899. You or your carer can ring this number 24 hour a day, 7 days a week.

How do I make a comment about my treatment?

If you have any suggestions or comments about your treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). PALS staff can listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and help sort out problems on your behalf.

Useful contacts

PALS: 0800 783 7176 Switchboard: Chelsea: 020 7352 8171 Sutton: 020 8642 6011

To contact your consultant's team (weekdays only) Please phone the hospital switchboard and ask to be put through to your consultant's secretary. Your consultant's name is on your finishing letter.

www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk

www.patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk

www.maggies.org

