

Finishing your radiotherapy treatment

Introduction

When you finish your radiotherapy treatment, you will be given advice by your radiographers about what to expect in the early weeks.

This leaflet gives you general information about coming to the end of your radiotherapy treatment and what happens next.

What happens next?

1. Follow-up clinic

Staff in the radiotherapy department will arrange an appointment for you to attend a follow-up clinic or receive a telephone follow-up appointment.

This appointment will be with your oncology consultant or a member of their team. If you have a clinic appointment, it may be at Cheltenham General Hospital, Hereford County Hospital or at a hospital closer to your home.

This appointment may not be for a while, usually between 4 to 8 weeks after your course of treatment has finished. The time until your follow-up appointment is to allow your treatment to carry on working, let side effects settle down and to give you time to recover. Your oncology team will then be better able to assess you.

Sometimes a follow-up appointment is not needed. In this instance, your GP is asked to take over your care and report back to the Oncology Centre. You will be told by your radiographers if this is the case.

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**Patient
Information**

2. Side effects and skin care

Any side effects that you have experienced due to your radiotherapy treatment such as sickness, sore throat, diarrhoea or fatigue/tiredness, may take some time to settle down. The length of time that this takes will vary from person to person but as a rule you can expect side effects to worsen over the week or two following treatment. They will then start to settle down. Fatigue can sometimes last for longer but if you are struggling, please speak to your key worker, GP or oncology team who can refer you to specialist services for help. Please visit www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/fatigue-and-cancer for further information.

You should continue to take any medication that you have been prescribed to help with side effects for as long as you feel you need it. These medications can be stopped when your side effects have settled.

Your skin may have become sore during your treatment. This may get worse for a week or two before it starts to settle. If your skin has not been sore during your radiotherapy, it may still become sore after your treatment has finished. Some people find that their skin stays sore for up to 6 weeks, this is quite normal. Any skin care advice you have been given by your radiographer should be continued for as long as you feel you need it. The skin reaction will settle down, but the time that this takes can vary, depending on the severity of your reaction and the type of treatment you have had.

Care should be taken when exposing the treated skin to the sun and wind as it is more sensitive and will always be so. A high factor sun screen should be used on the treated area in the future and exposure time limited.

If you have lost your hair because of radiotherapy treatment, it will not start to regrow for at least 2 months. This time depends on how much treatment you have had but sometimes the hair does not regrow. Each person is different and you will be advised individually.

Patient Information

3. Any worries

Although most patients are glad to finish their course of radiotherapy, it is quite common to feel anxious and worried about what happens next. You may find that after having contact with your radiographers so often, you feel alone, this is a normal reaction. Your radiographers can give you advice about the many support services available.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about your radiotherapy, please contact the **Radiotherapy Advice Line** on **0300 422 3243**.

This is an answer machine service, please leave your message and contact details. Your call will be returned within 2 working days.

If you need oncology help urgently, please call the:

Acute Haematology Oncology Unit

Tel: 0300 422 3444

In the case of an emergency, please contact your GP, NHS 111 or go to your nearest Emergency Department.

Further information

FOCUS Cancer Information Centre

Oncology Outpatients Department

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4414

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Focus can offer information and support on all aspects of cancer including support groups and companies who may be able to help with holiday insurance. They can also offer complimentary therapies to patients and carers.

**Patient
Information****Maggie's Cancer Caring Centre**

There is a Maggie's Cancer Caring Centre close to Cheltenham General hospital.

Maggie's

The Lodge
Cheltenham General Hospital
College Baths Road
Cheltenham
GL53 7QB
Tel: 01242 250 611

Website: www.maggiescentres.org

Cancer Information and Support Service

Macmillan Renton Unit
Hereford County Hospital
Tel: 01432 355444 ask for ext. 5459
Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4:30pm

Email: hereford.cancerinfoandsupport@nhs.net

The service offers confidential one-to-one support as well as information on all aspects of living with cancer and its treatments to anyone affected by cancer.

Macmillan Next Steps Cancer Rehabilitation

Cancer rehabilitation service offering support to enhance and maintain health and wellbeing through workshops, phone calls and email support. For more information contact:

Tel: 0300 421 6586

Email: nextsteps@ghc.nhs.uk

Website: www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/macmillan/

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>