

Radiotherapy to the pelvis (Female)

Your treatment appointments

You will need to arrive 40-60 minutes before your appointment time to complete your bowel and/or bladder preparation.

- A radiographer will collect you from the main oncology waiting area (A12) and explain the treatment to you and discuss possible side effects with you. **You will have the opportunity to ask questions at this point.**
- You will be shown to the changing room and asked to remove your shoes and items of clothing from the waist down (excluding underwear)
- You will then be taken into the treatment room. The radiographers will position you on the treatment couch. The room lights will be dimmed and a light and green laser lights will be shone on your skin to line up the treatment area with the machine.
- The radiographers will leave the room to begin the treatment. **Should you need assistance they will be watching you on TV screens throughout your treatment.**
- Treatment to the pelvis is given from two or more different angles or via an arc of treatment these are imaged daily prior to treatment to confirm treatment position.
- When the machine is on it makes a buzzing sound, but the treatment is painless.



Additional information

- **Dilators** - Some patients may need to use vaginal dilators after their treatment. A radiographer or specialist nurse will arrange a time to discuss this with you.
- **Brachytherapy** – Some patients may need to have internal radiotherapy. A radiographer or specialist nurse will arrange a time to discuss this with you.
- **Chemotherapy** – As part of your radiotherapy plan you may also have chemotherapy through your veins once a week; on this day your treatment will take longer as you will need to have your chemotherapy first, (1hour infusion) followed by your routine radiotherapy treatment. Your consultant or nurse specialist will discuss this with you.
- **Weekly reviews** – You may be seen by your nurse specialist.

Short term side effects

Most side effects are temporary and do not happen to all patients. They generally develop during the second week of a course of treatment and continue up to four to six weeks after your treatment has finished.

- **Tiredness**
- **Sore skin/red skin** in the treatment area
- **Loose bowels.**
- **Irritated bladder** causing you to pass urine more frequently. This can be accompanied by a burning sensation; this should be reported to the radiographers.
- **Haemorrhoids (piles).** If you have a previous history of piles the radiotherapy can aggravate them. Please ask the radiographers or nurse specialist before applying any creams or ointments.
- **Blood** – either in your urine or stools.



Long term side effects

Some side effects may occur months or years after treatment has finished. Your doctor or nurse specialist will discuss these with you before you start.

- **Lymphoedema** This is a swelling of the legs experienced in a small number of women who have usually had surgery.
- Change in **bowel** habits. This is usually controlled by diet. However in rare cases incontinence can occur; your consultant may need to refer you to bowel specialist.
- Change in **bladder** habits. However in rare cases incontinence can occur; your consultant may need to refer you to bladder specialist.
- Vaginal dryness and **stenosis** (narrowing of vagina)

Looking after yourself during and after your Radiotherapy

- ✓ **Do** continue washing/bathing as normal.
- ✓ **Do** be gentle with your skin, pat dry.
- ✓ **Do** avoid extremes of temperature such as heating and cooling pads.
- ✓ **Do** increase your fluid intake – ideally two litres of water a day, minimise alcohol consumption.
- ✓ **Do** keep the treatment area out of direct sunlight.
- ✓ **Do** feel free to discuss any worries with the radiographers.
- ✓ **Do** wear loose fitting cotton underwear.
- ✓ **Do** advise the radiographers and/or your nurse specialist of any changes to your bladder and/or bowel habits.
- ✓ **Do** read our 'Managing your Radiotherapy skin reaction' leaflet
- ✓ **Do** read 'Managing your side effects – Bowels' leaflet.

Smoking can make your skin reaction worse – if you need help to stop please ask for advice.

What happens after your course of radiotherapy?

After your course of Radiotherapy finishes you will receive a follow up appointment with your oncologist (you will be given an approximate date by the radiographers)

A radiographer will give you an information leaflet about what you need to do upon completion of your course of radiotherapy.

Radiotherapy department contact details

Telephone: 01225 824853

Monday-Friday 8am-3:30pm

Website: www.ruh.nhs.uk/patients/services/radiotherapy

Other useful phone numbers/websites

Bath RUH cancer information centre: (01225) 82 4049

Macmillan: www.macmillan.org.uk
08088 080000

CNS - Tracie Miles (01225) 82 1553

Life after cancer PocketMedic® have produced some patient information videos, available at www.medic.video/swe15-cancer (Life after cancer)

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.