

Radiotherapy to a bony area (short course)

Radiotherapy Department [Patient information](#)

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is a way to treat cancer and other illnesses. Your doctor has said you should have radiotherapy. It uses strong rays, usually x-rays, to kill the cancer cells in a certain part of the body.

Radiotherapy can also affect healthy cells in the area treated. Treatment is given in short sessions every day. This gives the healthy cells time to get better.

How many radiotherapy treatments you have depends on what you need. Your doctor will tell you when they see you. This information leaflet is a guide. If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask the team looking after you.

Planning your radiotherapy

Planning is a very important part of radiotherapy. It helps the doctors aim the treatment in the right place. This protects the healthy parts of your body around the area treated.

You will have a radiotherapy planning CT scan that takes about 30 minutes. During this scan you will lie on the bed in the same position you will be when you have your treatment. Pen marks are put on the skin to help them know where to treat.

You will be told the date to start your treatment and will have a phone call the day before. This phone call is a good chance to ask any questions.

Treatment

You will lie on the bed in the same way you did for your planning scan. A red light shines onto your body to help you get in the right position. You will need to take clothes off in the area being treated. It is important to lie very still, but you can breathe normally. You will not feel anything during the radiotherapy. It is like having an x-ray.

The radiographers will need to leave the room while the treatment is on, but they will watch you through a camera and listen to you through an intercom. They can stop the treatment if needed. Music can be played to help you feel calm if you want. The whole treatment takes about 15 minutes.

It is important that you are not, or do not become, pregnant during treatment. Remember to use contraception if you need to. If you have any questions about this, please ask your treatment team.

Side effects of radiotherapy

There are some side effects to radiotherapy. How bad they are changes between people.

- **Pain:** radiotherapy can help pain. However, pain can get worse for a short time. This lasts for a few days after the treatment. This is common and should settle quickly. You may need to take pain killers.
- **Tiredness:** this varies between patients and can be due to many factors. Do as much as you feel able to and rest when you need to. Often light exercise such as a short walk can help.
- **Nausea:** ginger or peppermint can help. There is also medicine you can be given. Eat little and often rather than big meals.
- **Swallowing:** depending on the area treated, it can be sore to swallow. Try eating soft foods with plenty of sauce or gravy. Eat little and often rather than attempting big meals. Avoid spicy foods, hot foods, or alcohol. Smoking will make your side effects worse.
- **Loose bowels:** depending on the area treated your bowels may be loose. If this happens you can reduce the fibre you eat for a few weeks. You can also use medicine such as Imodium.
- **Skin:** your skin may become red, dry, and itchy. Keep your skin moisturised and reduce friction. Use a skin cream, such as E45, around the treated area. Wash the skin gently with soap and water and gently pat dry. Wear loose fitting, natural fibre clothing next to the skin. Avoid rubbing the area. Avoid extremes of temperature such as heating and cooling pads.

Complementary therapies

The department has free complementary therapies on offer to all patients. They can help you cope with your treatment. If you would like further details, please speak to one of your radiographers. You can call the complementary therapists on **0300 019 8268**.

Chapel

There is a chapel within Poole Hospital. This is open to people of all faiths. It is on Level 1 of the hospital. It is open 24 hours a day. You can call the team on **0300 019 8153** or **0300 019 2167**.

Contact details

During treatment:

- Phone numbers are on the bottom of your appointment list.

Radiotherapy helpline:

- For radiotherapy questions after treatment there is the Dorset Radiotherapy Helpline (DORAH). This is an answerphone. It is checked by between 8am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. A message can be left at any time. Please call **0300 019 2481**. Please note this helpline is not for emergencies.

Oncology patient hotline:

- For urgent questions call the oncology patient hotline **0300 019 4302**. This can be called day or night. If your call is not answered leave a message. Give your name, hospital number and contact phone number. You should be called within half an hour. If you are not, please call again.

Nurse specialist

You should have the name of your specialist nurse. It might be helpful to add them to this leaflet. Please ask if you are not sure who your specialist nurse is:

Name: Contact number:

For further general health-related information please visit or contact:

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment

London

SE1 7UQ

Telephone: **0808 808 0000**

www.macmillan.org.uk

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please visit our website: **www.uhd.nhs.uk/visit/patient-information-leaflets**
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To ask for this leaflet in larger print, please contact the patient experience team on **0300 019 8499**
or email **uhd.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net**.

Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Robert White Radiotherapy Centre, Dorset County Hospital

Williams Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2JY

Author: **Rebecca Morgan** and **Helen Payne** Date: **October 2025** Version: **One** Review date: **October 2028** Ref: **140/25**

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