

# Radiotherapy for keloid scars

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## Radiotherapy Department Patient information

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### What is radiotherapy?

Your doctor has recommended you have radiotherapy. Radiotherapy is an effective treatment that is often used to treat cancer. It can also be used to treat other conditions, such as keloid scars.

Radiotherapy is the use of x-rays, or electrons, to prevent the scar tissue re-growing. It can also cause some damage to normal cells in the treatment area, so radiotherapy can have side effects.

The number of treatments you will receive depends on your individual needs and will be decided by the consultant or registrar at your clinic consultation. If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask any of the team looking after you.

### Planning your radiotherapy

Planning is a very important part of radiotherapy. It ensures the treatment is targeted accurately and causes the least possible damage to the surrounding healthy tissues.

You will receive an appointment for radiotherapy planning. The planning session will take about 30 minutes. Your consultant will measure the area for treatment and mark your skin with a pen.

### Treatment

The radiographers will position you in the same position as you were in when your treatment was planned. You will need to lie very still but breathe normally. You will not feel anything during the radiotherapy - it is very similar to having an x-ray taken.

The radiographers will need to leave the room while the radiation is on, but they can see you through a camera and hear you through the intercom. The treatment can be interrupted if needed. The whole appointment will usually take about 15 - 30 minutes.

### Skin care advice

- Try to keep the area dry if possible.
- Do not wet shave the area - an electric razor may be used but it is better not to shave every day.
- Do not apply creams, lotions, or make up in the area being treated.
- Keep the area protected from strong sunlight and wind by either covering it or using a hat to shade it.
- Leave the area open to the air as much as possible to encourage healing.
- If the area is weeping, or you wish to cover it, a simple non-stick dressing may be used. The team can give you a dressing or advise what to use. Do not use adhesive plaster or sticky tape in the treatment area.
- Try to avoid clothes, or anything else, rubbing the area.
- Avoid extremes of temperature such as heating and cooling pads. If you are having treatment near the hairline, let your hair dry naturally rather than using a hair dryer.

## Side effects after radiotherapy

- It is normal for the skin to become pink and tender towards the end of treatment and for some time after. Once your stitches are out, you can gently cleanse the area with lukewarm water and pat it gently dry. If the skin is not broken or weeping, a moisturiser can be applied twice a day.
- The treated area will continue to be more sensitive to sunlight, so a high factor sun cream or total sun block is recommended for the future.
- You may be permanently left with an area of skin that is a slightly different colour than the surrounding area.

## Contact details

### During treatment:

- If you need to contact the department during your course of radiotherapy you will find telephone numbers specific to your treatment unit at the bottom of your appointment list.

### Radiotherapy helpline:

- For radiotherapy related enquiries after treatment there is the Dorset radiotherapy helpline (DORAH). This is an answerphone service which is checked regularly by qualified radiotherapy radiographers between 8am and 5.30pm but 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 enquiries, day or night, contact the oncology patient hotline on **0300 019 4302**. If your call is not answered you will need to leave a message stating your name, hospital number, and contact telephone number. You should be phoned back within half an hour - in the unlikely event that you are not, please call again.

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