



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Radiotherapy: End of treatment

Information for patients



The Radiotherapy Department

This leaflet aims to answer questions you may have when you come to the end of radiotherapy treatment.

If you have any questions or need support or advice now that your radiotherapy has finished, please contact the Radiotherapy Department on **01865 235 465** in the first month following treatment. After this time, contact your GP, district nurse or cancer specialist nurse.

Your follow-up appointment

You should have already received a date for your follow-up appointment. This appointment will be to see your oncologist to discuss your recovery, plans for future monitoring and any further treatment.

Please prepare any questions you may have for this appointment. Your GP will also be sent details about the treatment you have received. To ensure this is sent correctly, please make sure you let us know of any changes to your GP details.

How do I know if my treatment has worked?

When you started radiotherapy your treatment team will have discussed with you the aims of your treatment.

If your treatment was aimed at contributing to a long-term cure, perhaps alongside surgery and/or chemotherapy, it may take many months or years to know if the treatment has been effective in preventing relapse of the disease.

If you were given radiotherapy in order to improve your symptoms, a benefit may be felt relatively quickly, within days or weeks of starting. You may not experience the full benefits of treatment until the short-term radiotherapy side effects have worn off.

If you have experienced any side effects of radiotherapy treatment, they may worsen for up to two weeks after radiotherapy has finished. After this time they should start to improve. Depending upon the aim of your treatment and the area of the body treated, side effects may continue for several months. Please speak to your oncologist about any remaining side effects at your follow-up appointment as they may be able to offer you advice or medication.

Skin care

Continue with your skin care until your skin has healed. This may take several weeks following treatment. The skin in the area you had treated will remain dry and sensitive to the sun. Exposure to the sun should be avoided by covering the treated area or using a high factor sun cream (SPF 30 or greater) once your skin has completely healed. You may need to moisturise your skin more often than before you had treatment.

Tiredness and emotion

Many people are relieved that their treatment is over, but the tiredness you experienced may continue and it can still be an emotional time. You may feel anxious and uncertain before your follow-up appointment or you may be keen to return to your normal routines and find that the on-going tiredness and feelings are holding you back. This is natural and it is important to give yourself time to adjust – recovery time is individual.

Support may be available from family and friends. It might help you to resume some hobbies and social activities you enjoy – gentle exercise can boost your mood. Both you and those around you can find advice and support from the Oxford Maggie's Centre (see contact details overleaf) or your local hospital's cancer unit. They have information on local support groups, supportive 'after treatment' programmes, counselling services, complimentary therapies and other cancer support organisations. Your GP may also be a source of support and advice regarding the impact of your experience on your emotions and relationships (including sexual relationships) and may refer you to local counselling services.

The Sexual Care after Radiotherapy Clinic is available to you for information and support if you would like to talk about any sexual changes radiotherapy may have caused.

You can make an appointment at the clinic:

Tel: **01865 227 213**

messages left on the answer phone will only be received by the therapeutic radiographers responsible for the clinic.

Email: **orh-tr.sexualcareafterrt@nhs.uk**

Nutrition

It is important to continue to maintain a healthy diet and drink plenty of fluids. You may have found that your eating habits have changed, so continue to have small snacks throughout the day rather than big meals if you need to. If you continue having problems with eating, speak with your GP or cancer specialist nurse, who can arrange for you to see a dietitian if necessary.

Keeping active

Alongside eating well, it is important to keep active when you have cancer. Physical activity:

- helps to reduce fatigue
- helps reduce anxiety and depression, and improves your mood
- improves your ability to absorb the nutrients from your food
- helps with some of the treatment side effects, such as easing constipation by helping to move food through your bowel
- boosts your immune system
- keeps your heart and lungs healthy
- reduces the risk of other diseases such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure
- improves your muscle strength and reduces muscle loss. This is especially important if you're losing weight as a result of cancer or cancer treatment.

Generally, it is safe and beneficial for people with cancer to exercise. However, it is best to start slowly and build up if you aren't used to exercising regularly. You may also want to let your doctor or nurse know if you want to start being more active as they might be able to signpost you towards an appropriately qualified exercise specialist, who can give you individual advice and support.

Useful contacts

There are details of useful organisations providing support and advice in the general radiotherapy leaflet.

Locally we have:

Maggie's Oxford Centre

Churchill Hospital
Old Road
Headington
Oxford
OX3 7LE

Tel: **01865 751 882**

(9am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: oxford@maggiescentre.org

Online community support is available at:

www.maggiescentres.org/our-centres/maggies-online-centre/

Macmillan Cancer Support also has online community support available:

www.macmillan.org.uk

Here for Health

Here for Health is a drop-in service at the Churchill Hospital which provides information and advice on healthy living.

Open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

Tel: **01865 222 958**

Search the OUH website (**www.ouh.nhs.uk**) for Here for Health for further information.

Further sources of information on healthy eating and lifestyle

British Dietetic Association:

www.bda.uk.com

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support

World Cancer Research Fund

www.wcrf-uk.org/uk/here-help/eat-well-during-cancer

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



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