

Advice following radiotherapy treatment for prostate cancer

This leaflet provides information on what to expect following the completion of radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

What happens now?

Please arrange a PSA and testosterone blood test 6 to 8 weeks after the completion of your radiotherapy treatment. You will need to arrange this blood test yourself either via your GP Surgery or at the Hospital. This will be reviewed at your first appointment following radiotherapy.

Monitoring

Your PSA and testosterone levels will initially be monitored 6 monthly unless advised otherwise at your appointment. You will need to arrange this blood test yourself. You may be added to a remote follow-up service. This service enables us to see your blood test results and review a questionnaire that you will be asked to complete online, this is done through an online system called Patients Know Best (PKB). If you do not have access to PKB or the internet, you will be able to complete the questionnaire via telephone/post. You will then receive a letter from us informing you of your results. In some cases your doctor or healthcare professional may recommend that your case is not appropriate for this service and will offer an alternative plan for follow-up which will be discussed at your appointment. You will receive further information on this service prior to your first 6 monthly blood test

Possible short-term radiotherapy side-effects

Time

It can take 6 to 8 weeks for acute side-effects from the radiotherapy to settle. You will be assessed for these at your first appointment following radiotherapy. During this time, you may experience some of the following symptoms:

Urinary symptoms

You may experience issues with your waterworks which can include rushing to the toilet to pass urine, passing urine more frequently, a slower urinary flow, getting up more at night to pass urine, pain when passing urine, or slight leakage of urine.

What can help?

- Aim to reduce any fluid intake, including water, 4 hours before you go to bed
- Trial cutting out alcohol and caffeine (tea and coffee) or changing to decaffeinated drinks
- Trial taking paracetamol regularly or just before bedtime (take as advised, do not exceed recommended daily dose)
- If you are noticing a stinging pain when urinating, you should contact your GP Practice to check for an infection
- If your symptoms are not settling, please contact your assigned urology clinical nurse specialist

Bowel symptoms

You may experience issues with your bowels which can include loose stools, diarrhoea, constipation, flatulence, mucus or bleeding from the back passage.

What can help?

- If your stools are loose, try to follow a low fibre diet, avoid spicy foods, and consider using Loperamide (Imodium branded or unbranded) which you can buy from your local pharmacy
- If you are struggling to pass stool consider using a laxative which you can buy and can be recommended from your local pharmacy
- A small amount of bleeding or mucus can be expected however, if this is not settling or is significant or associated with a lot of diarrhoea, please contact your assigned urology clinical nurse specialist

Fatigue

You may experience tiredness, lack of energy or motivation.

Macmillan and Prostate Cancer UK have a number of resources to help manage symptoms of fatigue. Please see link below:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/tiredness>

Possible late side-effects from radiotherapy

You may experience late side-effects from the radiotherapy treatment. These will have been discussed with you at your first oncology appointment, and more information can be found in your information booklet on pelvic radiotherapy and on your copy of the radiotherapy consent form. These can also be discussed further at your next oncology appointment.

Managing hormone treatment side-effects

Whether you need hormone treatment and the length of time you are required to stay on your hormone treatment will depend on each individual case. Please check the letter from your previous oncology appointment for this information but if you cannot see it documented, this will be discussed at your next oncology appointment.

More common side effects from hormone treatment include:

- Fatigue
- Hot flushes
- Effect on mood
- Weight gain
- Effect on libido

Please see resource below for advice on managing these symptoms:

<https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information-and-support/living-with-prostate-cancer/how-hormone-therapy-affects-you>

Sources of information

There are a number of resources online on the Macmillan website and on the Prostate Cancer UK website. You may have also been given further information in your initial information packs at diagnosis.

For more information or if you can't access a computer, please speak to your oncology clinical nurse specialist team.

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr Caroline Manetta, Clinical Oncologist

Dr Sally Appleyard, Clinical Oncologist

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Medicine - Haematology / Oncology

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