

# Radiotherapy under general anaesthetic

## Information for patients, parents and guardians

Your child's doctor has referred them for radiotherapy treatment. Radiotherapy involves the use of high-energy radiation and is commonly used to treat cancer - almost half of people with cancer have radiotherapy as part of their treatment plan.

This factsheet explains what to expect at your child's radiotherapy treatment appointments, to help you know what to expect. It aims to answer some of the initial questions you are likely to have but if you would like more information or have any concerns, please speak to a radiographer who will be pleased to advise you.

### Having a general anaesthetic

It's essential that your child stays still throughout their radiotherapy session so that we can treat them accurately. Because of this, we may need to give them a general anaesthetic (medicine to make them go to sleep) so that we can deliver their radiotherapy safely. We will discuss this with you in advance if it applies to your child.

Before your child's first radiotherapy appointment, they will need to come in for a CT (computerised tomography) scan to help us plan their treatment. It's possible that the CT planning scan will be performed under a general anaesthetic. If this is the case, we will advise you in advance.

### Before each general anaesthetic

Your child must not eat for six hours before their general anaesthetic. They can drink water up until two hours before. We'll try to make sure their radiotherapy appointments are early in the morning to make this easier.

### CT planning appointment

The consultant paediatric anaesthetist (specialist doctor) will meet you and your child on Piam Brown ward before the CT planning scan. They will check your child's health and answer any questions that you may have. You will then come down to the radiotherapy department where you'll meet the radiographers who will explain about the CT scan.

You can be in the CT room with your child while they have their general anaesthetic. Once they are asleep, we will show you to the waiting room whilst we conduct the CT scan.

After their scan, your child will be taken into a room to recover from the general anaesthetic. We will collect you from the waiting room when they are awake. You will both be able to go home when they have recovered.

### Radiotherapy treatment

On the day of your child's first radiotherapy appointment, the anaesthetist will meet you on Piam Brown ward. You will then come down to the radiotherapy department where the radiographers will explain what's going to happen. Feel free to ask any questions you may have at this point.

Just like in the CT scan, you will be able to accompany your child into the treatment room and stay with them until they are asleep. The radiographers will then ask you to take a seat in the waiting room whilst your child has their treatment. One treatment session usually takes between 15 and 45 minutes.

After their radiotherapy your child will be taken to a recovery room. You will be able to see them when they have woken up.

For the rest of your child's radiotherapy appointments, you will usually be able to come straight to the radiotherapy department instead of going to Piam Brown ward first.

Please arrive 15 minutes before the appointment time and wait in the children's waiting room. Remember to tell the anaesthetist if there have been any changes to your child's health.

### **After each general anaesthetic**

Once your child has recovered from their general anaesthetic you will be able to take them home. They should have a quiet day supervised by an adult, but they can eat and drink normally.

### **Useful information**

If you have any questions or would like more information about anything in this factsheet, you can speak to the paediatric radiotherapy advanced practitioner on telephone: **023 8177 7222, bleep 1169**.

To find out more about having a general anaesthetic, including video content and special leaflets for children and young people, visit the Royal College of Anaesthetists website at: **[www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo)**

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital)