

Patient information factsheet

Having a microwave ablation of the liver

We've written this factsheet as a guide to having a microwave ablation of the liver. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

What is a microwave ablation of the liver?

Microwave ablation is a treatment that aims to destroy liver tumours with targeted heat, rather than removing them through surgery. This treatment is suitable for people who have a few small tumours or for those who are unable to have surgery.

Microwave ablation works by inserting special needles through your skin and into the tumour, using image guidance equipment (CT imaging), and then heating and destroying the abnormal tissue with microwave energy.

Why do I need microwave ablation?

Your doctor has recommended that you have microwave ablation because you have a tumour that is suitable for this treatment.

Preparing for the procedure

We will send you a letter in the post explaining how to prepare for your procedure. Please follow the instructions in your letter carefully.

This procedure uses radiation so could be harmful to an unborn baby. If you are a female of child-bearing age, we will ask you to complete a form with the date of your last period and whether there is any possibility that you may be pregnant. If you know or think you might be pregnant, or are currently breastfeeding, you should telephone us for advice as soon as you receive your appointment letter.

During the procedure

You will have the procedure in the radiology department. It will be performed by a doctor called an interventional radiologist. The procedure will take around one to two hours.

Microwave ablation is done under a general anaesthetic (a medicine that sends you to sleep) so you will not be aware of anything during the procedure.

During the procedure, we will use imaging equipment to help guide us to insert needles through your skin and into the tumour. When the needles are in the correct position, we will deliver microwaves from the ablation system directly into the target area of the tumour. The microwaves will heat the area to more than 60°C and this will kill the tissue.

When the ablation is complete, we will remove the needles from your body. We will then place a small dressing on the sites of insertion.

After the procedure

We will monitor you after your procedure to make sure you remain well. Most people who have this procedure will need to stay overnight in hospital. If this is the case, we will discuss this with you. Your medical team will review you after your procedure and if you are feeling well, you will be able to go home.

You must avoid heavy exercise and heavy lifting activities for one week after your procedure.

Do not drive for at least two days after your procedure.

You may experience some discomfort or tenderness around the site of your treatment. Take pain relief medication on a regular basis if you need to.

Risks

To be able to carry out your procedure, we need to use x-rays (a type of radiation used to see inside your body). Exposure to radiation can slightly increase a person's lifetime cancer risk, but for this procedure, the risk is moderate. Your doctor has decided that the benefit to you from the procedure outweighs the low risk from the radiation.

You will not be exposed to any more x-rays than is absolutely necessary.

Symptoms to watch out for after your procedure

It is highly unlikely that you will have problems following your treatment.

Go to the **emergency department** immediately if you experience:

- severe abdominal pain
- a feeling of being lightheaded or faint
- shortness of breath
- a fever or vomiting

If you develop minor ongoing discomfort in your abdomen, or swelling of your calf (without shortness of breath), please contact your GP within 24 hours of noticing these symptoms.

Results

We will ask you to come in for a follow-up CT scan within a month of having your microwave ablation. If you do not receive an appointment letter inviting you for a CT scan, please contact the interventional radiology secretaries as detailed below. You will not usually be seen by a doctor when you come for your scan or be given any results on that day. Your results will be sent to the consultant who referred you for the procedure. Your consultant will then arrange a follow-up outpatient clinic appointment to discuss your results with you.

Are there any alternatives?

Your doctor will only have requested microwave ablation if they feel that this is the best way to treat your condition. However, there are other types of treatments available, including:

- alcohol injection
- radiofrequency ablation
- chemoembolisation
- surgery to remove liver tumours

If microwave ablation is not suitable for you, we will be happy to discuss alternative options with you.

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Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the relevant details below.

If you have questions **before** the procedure, please call the interventional oncology specialist nurse on **07786 126392** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

If we cannot answer your call, please leave a message on the answer phone with your name and hospital number and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Interventional radiology secretary

Telephone: **023 8120 1329**

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (voicemail available)

Useful links

www.nhs.uk

www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/liver-cancer/treatment

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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