

Patient information factsheet

Welcome to radiotherapy

This factsheet contains information about your visit to the radiotherapy department at Southampton General Hospital and aims to answer some of the initial questions you are likely to have. We will discuss your specific treatment with you in person and supply further written information as required.

If you have any further questions or would like more information about anything, please feel free to ask your doctors or radiographers.

About us

The radiotherapy department is part of the Southampton oncology centre, located at:
Southampton General Hospital, Tremona Road, Southampton, SO16 6YD.

Where to find us

Level A in East Wing of the hospital, near the eye unit. Follow the signs to oncology and radiotherapy.

Getting here

By bus or train

There are a number of bus services that run to Southampton General Hospital from all parts of the city and Southampton Central train station. For the most up-to-date information call Travel Line on 0871 200 2233 or visit www.southampton.gov.uk

By car

Southampton General Hospital is located in the north of the city, with easy access from the M3 or M27. There is a drop off point outside the oncology centre (follow signs for the emergency department and eye unit). Please park in one of the designated patient car parks. We recommend you allow plenty of time for parking, as our car parks can get very busy and spaces are limited. Discounted parking is available to patients receiving radiotherapy - please enquire at the radiotherapy reception.

Direct access to department between 8am and 6pm

Between 8am and 6pm there is direct access to the radiotherapy department via a ramp to Level A. During these times follow the signs to the emergency department and eye unit (rather than the hospital main entrance). Limited parking is available behind the radiotherapy department, which can be accessed directly via the ramp located behind the eye unit. There is also direct wheelchair access. Outside these times please enter the hospital via the main entrance.

Directions if you are entering via the main hospital

Our friendly volunteer guides will be pleased to help you if need assistance.

- You will arrive on Level C within the concourse of shops. At the crossroads, please turn left and continue walking until you reach the Centre block lifts. Take the lift or stairs down to Level B (one floor).
- Turn right out of the lifts/stairwell, and walk towards Oncology CT.

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- When you reach the sign for Oncology CT, turn right.
- Walk through two sets of double doors, where you will find the reception desk for Diagnostic CT. Continue past this and take the lift or stairs down one floor to Level A.
- On Level A, you will find the radiotherapy department. Please follow the signposts to the radiotherapy reception where you will also find a small coffee shop.

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy uses high energy x-rays (radiation) to destroy cancer cells. Some of the healthy cells in the area being treated may be damaged too, but are able to repair themselves quickly. Almost half of people with cancer have radiotherapy as part of their treatment plan. Radiotherapy does not make you radioactive, and it is safe for you to be around children and other people during treatment.

Radiotherapy planning

Because everybody is different, an individual treatment plan is developed for every patient. Before your radiotherapy treatment starts you will come to the department for a CT scan. The images from the CT scan provide us with a detailed and accurate view of the area to be treated. Your doctors and specialist radiographers will use this information to identify the exact area to be treated, plan your treatment and calculate the most effective dose of radiation for you.

The planning session may last up to one hour, however the actual time spent in the CT scanner is approximately ten minutes. You will need to keep as still as you can for the scan.

You may have to come for a CT planning scan more than once.

The area to be treated will be marked with ink and permanent marks. Don't worry if the marks fade. Please do not attempt to replace them yourself.

Some patients will need to wear a plastic mask to help them keep still. You will receive extra information about this if required for your treatment.

Don't worry if there is a gap between your planning appointment and the start of your treatment. It can take up to three weeks for a treatment plan to be completed.

What to expect

How many treatments will I need?

Radiotherapy treatment ranges from one treatment to a course, lasting six or more weeks. Each treatment is known as a 'fraction'. The number of fractions you will receive bears no relation to the seriousness of the illness, but depends on your general health, as well as the site and type of cancer. Each treatment session can last between five and twenty minutes.

We will provide a list of your treatment appointments, however please be aware that these are subject to change. We'll let you know if this is the case.

What happens on the day?

Each time you come for treatment, a radiographer will call you from the waiting area and check your name, date of birth and address. Before entering the treatment room, you will be asked to remove any clothing that covers the area to be treated, and to put on a hospital gown.

The radiographers will take time to position you carefully for treatment, using the reference marks that were applied at your CT planning scan. It is important that you keep as still as possible during this time.

Once you have been positioned correctly, the staff will leave the room to switch on the machine. They will monitor you closely throughout the treatment.

Radiotherapy treatment is painless and only takes a few minutes to deliver.

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Healthcare professionals you will meet in the radiotherapy department

You will meet a number of different members of the team, including:

- **Clinical oncologists** are doctors who will supervise your care and treatment.
- **Therapeutic radiographers** will deliver your treatment. They are specially trained in radiotherapy and patient care and work closely with the doctors in planning your treatment and will provide support, advice and information.
- **Radiotherapy nursing staff** can provide advice and support throughout the course of your treatment.
- **Physicists** work behind the scenes. They will work closely with your doctor to plan and calculate your treatment.

Other staff who you may meet include: dietitians, play specialists for children, reception staff and nurse and radiographer specialists.

Students

We're a teaching hospital so there may be a range of students involved in your care. They will identify themselves to you so you know they're a student and will wear appropriate ID badges, either from the trust or their respective college or university. All students are closely monitored while in the department. Please speak to a radiographer if you have any objections about being seen by students.

Side effects

Radiotherapy can cause side effects throughout the course of your treatment. These vary from person to person, and will depend on the area of the body that is being treated. Your doctor will have explained the potential side effects from your specific treatment when you signed your consent form. During treatment, please discuss any side effects you may be experiencing with your radiographers, who will be able to offer any advice and support that you may need.

After radiotherapy

It can take time to fully recover from the side effects of radiotherapy treatment. This can be longer if you're also receiving other treatment, such as chemotherapy, at the same time. We recommend that you allow yourself time to recover after treatment has finished. Please do not try to resume all your usual work and activities immediately. If you're considering taking a holiday, please discuss this with your doctor, as they may suggest you wait until the side effects from treatment have subsided.

If there is anything you do not understand or would like to ask, please feel free to ask a member of staff when you come in for your treatment. We are all here to help you.

Useful information and telephone numbers

Radiotherapy reception (8am to 6pm) **023 8120 8568**

Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre East **023 8120 6037**
Wing Courtyard, Level B, Southampton General Hospital

The information and support service is available to all people affected by cancer, offering:

- a warm welcome in a relaxed and confidential environment
- someone to listen and discuss your needs with you
- a range of cancer information
- relaxation and complementary therapies
- access to benefits and employment law advice
- access to counselling

Drop in service: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm. Appointments are also available if you prefer.

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Macmillan Support Line (freephone)	0808 8080 000
Hospital chaplaincy team (you don't need to have a particular faith or belief in order to use this service)	023 8120 8517
Citizens Advice Bureau (including benefits advice)	03444 111 444
Wessex Cancer Trust	023 8067 2200
Cancer Research UK cancer information nurse helpline	0808 800 4040

Useful links

NHS Choices – Radiotherapy: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Radiotherapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Cancer Research UK – Radiotherapy: www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/about-cancer/treatment/radiotherapy

Southampton General Hospital – Radiotherapy
www.uhs.nhs.uk/OurServices/Cancer/Radiotherapy/Radiotherapy.aspx

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