

# At the end of your radiotherapy

The aim of this information sheet is to answer some of the questions you may have after finishing your radiotherapy treatment, and to advise you on what to expect over the next few weeks.

Details of your treatment and any side effects that you may continue to experience can be found on the Treatment Completion Form that you were given on the last day of treatment.

## How long will I experience the side effects of radiotherapy?

Any side effects that you have been experiencing, or have been advised to expect, will continue for some weeks after treatment has finished. The side effects may become worse before they start to improve. This is normal and your reactions will gradually settle. Until then please continue to follow the advice you have been given.

## How should I look after my skin?

Everyone reacts differently to radiotherapy. If you do not have a skin reaction by the end of treatment, you may develop one over the next few days.

Your skin may be a little dry, red or itchy. We advise that you continue with the skin care advised during your treatment until your skin returns to normal. Do not use any other products in the treatment area until then.

Once your skin has fully healed, you can use your normal skin care products again.

## How should I look after my skin in the sun?

After treatment, if you have a skin reaction you will need to keep that area covered until the reaction has settled. The skin in the treatment area is always going to be more sensitive to the sun, so it needs to be protected either with clothing or a high factor sun cream.

## What about my diet?

Try to eat your normal diet and drink plenty of fluids.

If the side effects of treatment have altered your appetite or bowel habits, please continue to follow the advice you were given during treatment. Return to your usual diet slowly until your body is able to manage what is normal for you.

## How do I manage tiredness (fatigue)?

Radiotherapy can make you feel tired. We advise you to rest when you can – your body will let you know when you need to relax. However, it can be helpful to have a little light exercise (e.g. about 20 minutes walking) each day. This can make you feel less tired and can lift your spirits.

It may be that you are tired because you are not sleeping well at night. Relaxation techniques may help with this, or your GP may prescribe a mild sleeping tablet to help you break the habit of waking at night.

## How will I feel when I finish treatment?

After having daily contact with staff and other patients, some people feel quite low or depressed when they finish treatment. This is a normal reaction. Sometimes these feelings can be made worse by tiredness, but they will pass in time. You may like to consider joining a support group where you can share your experiences with others. Dimbleby Cancer Care can offer one-to-one psychological support if you would like to talk with a counsellor to help you cope (see contact details below). You may also be able to find support at your local hospital.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Your follow-up appointment will usually be at the hospital where you were originally seen. This appointment will be with your oncology doctor or a member of their team.

Please see the follow-up information that you were given at the start of radiotherapy treatment for details of how to make this appointment. If you do not have this information or have not made an appointment, please call the **treatment support team** on **020 7188 4220**.

## Who do I contact if I have any questions about radiotherapy?

If you are concerned about anything related to the side effects of your radiotherapy treatment, please call the **treatment support team** on **020 7188 4220**. In an emergency, please contact your GP or out of hours visit your local accident and emergency (A&E) department.

Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets). For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## For more information

The booklet you were given at the start of radiotherapy will contain more information about your particular treatment.

**Macmillan Cancer Support produces a series of free booklets that you may find helpful:**

- Coping with fatigue
- Life after cancer treatment
- Your feelings after cancer treatment
- Exercise after cancer treatment

You can send for these booklets by contacting:

**Macmillan Cancer Support** (freephone) **t:** 0808 808 0000 **w:** [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)



**Dimbleby Cancer Care** provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. **t:** 020 7188 5918 **e:** [DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### **Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Language and accessible support services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### **NHS Choices**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust**

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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