

Radiotherapy after surgery to your keloid scar

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having your keloid scar treated with radiotherapy following surgery. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to the radiographer caring for you.

What is a keloid scar?

A keloid scar is an over-growth of scar tissue that is often removed by surgery.

What are the benefits of having radiotherapy after surgery?

Although the scar tissue will be removed by surgery, it may grow back. Radiotherapy may prevent re-growth of the tissue.

What are the risks of radiotherapy?

If the scar is in an area where there is hair growing, there may be some hair loss, although hair will usually re-grow. Skin in the treatment area may become lighter or darker in colour. This may return to normal or stay a slightly different colour to the rest of your skin. Side effects are isolated to the area where you are having treatment.

When do I have the radiotherapy?

As soon as you know the date for your surgery, please telephone 020 7188 3160 to arrange an appointment for your radiotherapy treatment. This is because you need to have your radiotherapy 24–48 hours after your surgery.

How can I prepare for radiotherapy to my keloid scar?

Your doctor will tell you exactly what the radiotherapy treatment will entail. You will then be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the possible side effects and agree to have radiotherapy.

Are there any alternatives?

Steroid injections may be given, but these cannot be used too often.

Asking for your consent

The doctor caring for you will need to ask your permission to perform a particular treatment or investigation.

You will be asked to sign a consent form that says you have agreed to the treatment and that you understand the benefits, risks and alternatives. If there is anything you don't understand or if you need more time to think about it, please tell the staff caring for you.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time, even if you have signed the consent form. Let staff know immediately if you change your mind. Your wishes will be respected at all times. If you would like to read our consent policy, please tell a member of staff.

How is treatment planned?

To plan the treatment you will need to lie on a couch and have any dressings removed. The doctor will use a bright light to look at the area that needs to be treated and will draw marks onto your skin using a marker pen.

The radiographer will record the treatment area by taking measurements and, with your consent, a photograph of the area.

What happens during the treatment?

Sometimes shielding will be needed to protect the skin around the scar from radiation during the treatment. This is made from a thin sheet of lead which is laid on the skin.

The radiographer will move the machine to rest on your skin, and a small amount of pressure may be used to keep this in place. A lead apron will be placed across your body during treatment to protect you. Treatment is painless and you will not feel anything when the machine is switched on.

The radiographers will leave the room during the treatment, but will watch you on closed circuit television (CCTV). It is important that you keep as still as possible. The radiographer can stop the treatment if you need assistance at any time. Treatment takes between two and eight minutes.

What happens after the treatment?

The radiographers will dress the area if necessary and then you may go home.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You should follow any advice you were given in the day surgery unit about dressings or the removal of stitches. If you have been using any creams in the area, you should check with your dermatologist if you should continue with these, although we would advise you to use only **Doublebase® gel** until any skin reaction has settled. Your skin may be tender and this may last for up to three weeks.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow-up appointment with the dermatologist you originally saw. This should be about four to six weeks after your radiotherapy.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your radiotherapy treatment, please contact the Superficial Skin Treatment Unit on **020 7188 7188** (enter extension **57573**) between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

For further details about your surgery dates you will need to contact the plastics admissions team on **020 7188 9544** or **020 7188 3209** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

If you have an urgent problem out of hours (for example, bleeding from the site of the scar) please call **020 7188 7188** and ask the operator to bleep the plastic surgeon on call.

If there is a problem after you have had radiotherapy treatment, contact the Day Surgery Unit on **020 7188 3222**.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the 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

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** 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

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

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 **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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