Radiotherapy for skin lymphomas

This information leaflet is about radiotherapy for skin lymphomas, including cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (which includes Sézary syndrome & mycosis fungoides).

If you have any questions, or would like more advice, please ask a member of your team. The team consists of radiographers, doctors and nurses who will help and support you throughout your treatment. Contact numbers can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Radiotherapy
Radiotherapy uses radiation (high energy X-rays or similar rays) to treat cancer. It damages your body’s cells within the treatment area, killing the cancer cells but allowing your normal cells to recover. Its side effects are generally isolated to the area you are having treated.

Treatment
You will see a specialist cancer doctor (an oncologist). This appointment will be at the Cancer Centre at Guy’s.

Your doctor will prescribe the amount of radiation needed for your treatment. This amount may be given in one treatment or divided up into smaller doses (called fractions) that are given over a period of days or weeks.

Your doctor will discuss with you your course of radiotherapy and any possible side effects. You will be asked to sign a consent form. This is to confirm that you agree to have the radiotherapy treatment.

If you have any further questions please ask the radiographers when they ask you to verbally confirm that you wish to have radiotherapy.

Marking the treatment area
This takes place in the Cancer Centre at Guy’s Hospital, level R2.

You will need to lie on the treatment couch. A doctor will use a bright light and a magnifying glass to look at the area of your skin to be treated. Marks will be made on your skin with a felt pen to outline the area(s) of treatment.

The radiographer will record the treatment area by taking measurements and, with your consent, a photograph.
**During treatment**
We may need to protect an area around the treatment site with a thin piece of sheet lead. This will be placed on your skin.

Part of the radiotherapy machine will rest on your skin during treatment. You may feel a small amount of pressure on your skin because of this. The treatment is painless and you will not feel anything.

The radiographer will leave the room while the treatment is being given but will watch you on closed circuit television. If you need help, wave your hand. The radiographer can stop the treatment and return to the room to assist you.

Treatment can last between two and eight minutes.

**During treatment it is important that you stay still.**

When your treatment ends, the radiographer will remove the skin marks. You will be given details of further appointments if required and advice on how to look after your skin.

**Follow-up appointment**
You will have a follow-up appointment with the doctor who originally referred you for radiotherapy. If you do not know when this is, please ask the radiographer on your last day of treatment.

**Side effects during radiotherapy**
Only skin in the treatment area will experience side effects. As treatment progresses this area may become red, itchy and sore. The skin reaction will become worse as the treatment progresses. This will continue for about seven to ten days after treatment is complete and then any side effects will gradually settle.

If you have any hair growing in the area it may fall out. It may start to grow back a few months after treatment.

**Skin care**
The staff will advise you on how to look after your skin during treatment.

You do not need any special skin care following treatment. You may wash using your usual soap and moisturiser – many of you will have already been prescribed this by your dermatology team.
Coping with diagnosis
This can be a worrying time. Changes in your appearance may be distressing to you and to those close to you.

Talking about your concerns can help you to find ways of coping. Staff caring for you can help you to find answers to questions or worries that you may have. They can also help you find out about other sources of information and support.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is for patients and carers attending the Cancer Centre at Guy’s Hospital and King’s College Hospital. It provides information, psychological support and complementary therapy for people affected by cancer.

Support group
There is a support group held in the centre for people with skin lymphoma. It is held every second Monday of the month at Dimbleby Cancer Care, in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy’s Hospital. You can contact them for more information on t: 020 7188 5918.

Psychological support
There is a clinical psychologist especially for those affected by skin lymphoma. Her aim is to help you live better with the diagnosis and to reduce distress. If you would like to talk to the clinical psychologist, you can ask your doctor or clinical nurse specialist to refer you, or you can call t: 020 7188 7188, ext 51874.

Contact us
If you need to talk to someone while you are on treatment, please call the radiotherapy reception on t: 020 7188 7188 (enter extension 57542 or 57569), Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. If you have a problem in the evening or at the weekend, please contact the main switchboard on t: 020 7188 7188 and ask for ‘operator’ or press 0. Then ask for the clinical oncology registrar on call.

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. For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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
Useful sources of information
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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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  **w:** 111.nhs.uk

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

**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, please contact us.

**t:** 0800 731 0319  **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk  **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?
We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

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