

Breathlessness

Radiation can cause inflammation (pneumonitis) and scarring (fibrosis) of the lung. This usually occurs two to three months after finishing treatment. It may be possible to learn breathing exercises or use medication that will help reduce your breathlessness. Your treatment team can advise you.

Narrowing of your food pipe (oesophagus)

Radiation can cause narrowing of the food pipe. If you experience swallowing difficulties greater than three months after completing your treatment, you may need further assessment and treatment. A minor procedure to stretch the food pipe or, very rarely, surgery may be needed.

Heart

Radiation may cause inflammation of the lining surrounding the heart (pericarditis) or some weakening of the heart muscle (myopathy) resulting in chest pain and shortness of breath. This is rare and may require further assessment and treatment. In rare instances, radiotherapy may cause some damage to the blood vessels supplying the heart and increase your risk of a heart attack.

Bone weakness affecting the ribs

This is rare, but radiotherapy can make some of the ribs more brittle. After a severe cough or mild trauma, this can result in chest pain and/or a minor rib fracture.

Spinal cord damage

This is extremely rare and every effort is made to carefully plan your radiotherapy so as to avoid this. Damage to the spinal cord causes permanent difficulties with walking and loss of sensation in the lower body.

MISSION STATEMENT

To act as a model institution to alleviate the suffering of patients with cancer through the application of modern methods of curative and palliative therapy irrespective of their ability to pay, the education of health care professionals and the public and perform research into the causes and treatment of cancer.



Revenue from these services is spent on the treatment of poor cancer patients.

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Radical Radiotherapy:

Radiotherapy may be given as the only treatment. 20 to 33 treatments (fractions) are given daily (Monday to Friday) lasting for about four to six and a half weeks. The purpose of this treatment is to slow down or reduce the growth of the tumour in your lung. This is known as **radical** radiotherapy.

Radiotherapy with Chemotherapy:

Sometimes radical radiotherapy is given with chemotherapy drugs - this aims to either shrink the tumour so that we can give the treatment to a smaller area or to boost the radiotherapy. Chemotherapy can be given before your course of radiotherapy (induction chemotherapy) or during your course of radiotherapy (concomitant chemotherapy). Your doctor will discuss whether chemotherapy is appropriate for you and which type you will have.

Radiotherapy to treat symptoms

Radiotherapy can also be given to treat symptoms that are causing you problems. These include cough, chest pain, shortness of breath or when you are coughing up blood. This type of radiotherapy is called **palliative** treatment and you may receive one treatment or up to 12 treatments delivered daily Monday to Friday over two and a half weeks.

Radiotherapy after surgery:

Radiotherapy is used after surgery to kill off. The treatment will not begin until your wound has completely healed. Radiotherapy given sooner would slow down the healing process.

Side Effects:

Radiotherapy treatment is painless. However, there are some side effects which are associated with radiotherapy and you may notice one or more of them gradually developing over the course of treatment.

Please note that it is rare for one patient to experience all of these side effects. If any thing is worrying you, however small, during your treatment, please tell your therapy radiographer or radiotherapy nurse either at your visit or by phoning the department. Smoking while you are having treatment can cause your side effects to develop earlier, possibly be worse than usual and harder for you to cope with. We strongly advise you to try to give up smoking. We can help you contact services who can advise and support you.

Tiredness

You may feel tired especially toward the end of a course of treatment. Allow your self extra time to rest or sleep. The tiredness wears off over a few weeks once the treatment ends.

Skin reaction

Most people develop a skin reaction in the area being treated, especially on the back. The area may become red, drier, sensitive or begin to peel. It is usual for the skin reaction to begin two to three weeks after the beginning of a radiotherapy course. It will last for a small number of weeks after radiotherapy is complete.

Difficulty swallowing and indigestion

This may happen if the radiotherapy includes your food pipe (Oesophagus) in the area of treatment. This usually occurs after two to three weeks of treatment and begins to get better about three months after the treatment has finished. Avoid hot or cold drinks - warm fluids might be more bearable. You might also need to make your food softer and moister. A combination of pain killers and antacid medicines can help, normally prescribed by your doctor. Always take the medication regularly - before eating and drinking.

Nausea (feeling sick)

This may occur during your treatment. It is important to continue to eat and drink, try eating small meals more frequently. If nausea persists or you are vomiting (being sick) then please tell your the rapyradiographer, nurse, doctor.

Cough

You can develop a cough which maybe dry and tickly or you may cough up blood. This is normal. It may be relieved with sipping a drink. Some people find simple cough medicine helps. The irritation caused by the radiotherapy should settle within a few weeks of completing your treatment. If the sputum changes color, becomes thicker or you have a temperature, please tell the therapy radiographers treating you. It may be a sign of infection.

Chest discomfort

This can occur in the 24 hours following your treatment. It is more common in patients having one or two treatments. It should go away by itself or a simple painkiller. Tell the therapy radiographer when you attend for treatment if it does not resolve.

Temperature and shivering

Patients, usually having one treatment, can experience shivering and begin to feel hot, within hours of having their radiotherapy. With a simple pain killer, like Paracetamol and rest this should disappear in the following 24hours.

Long term side effects

Long term side effects can occur many months to years after radiotherapy has finished. These late side effects are hard to predict and unfortunately if they do occur can be permanent. We plan the treatment to avoid the surrounding areas around the tumour as much as possible to reduce these side effects.