

## Bladder

In rare cases the bladder may shrink after radiotherapy. You may feel the urge to go more often or the need to pass urine urgently. A small proportion of patients may feel more confident wearing pads. There is a small risk that you may need surgery to the bladder.

The blood vessels in the bladder can become more fragile, resulting in blood in the urine. If you notice any blood it's important to let your doctor know so that tests can be done and the appropriate treatment given.

## Fertility

Radiotherapy to the pelvic area causes permanent infertility. If that is important to you, your treatment team will discuss this with you before treatment begins and advise you regarding the possible options.

## Altered hormone levels

Men – a reduction in testosterone levels in men can cause low sex drive and in some cases impotence. Difficulties achieving an erection, following a course of radiotherapy are more common in men over the age of 50 and may be permanent. Treatment is available in the form of medication from your family doctor.

Women – many women, still having regular periods, will become permanently menopausal in the three to four months after treatment has finished. Your treatment team can discuss this with you before treatment begins and advise you.

## After treatment

After your treatment has finished you will be asked to return to the Outpatient Clinic to be reviewed by your oncology consultant or his/ her team.

Radiotherapy takes time to work and so it is at this appointment your doctor will assess and discuss your progress and any continuing side effects with you and plan future appointments. This will include a check cystoscopy about three months or so after your radiotherapy has finished checking that the cancer has not come back. You will need to have cystoscopies at regular intervals, usually every three to six months after that.

## How to contact us

If you have any queries **during** your radiotherapy please do not hesitate to ask a radiotherapy radiographer treating you or the radiotherapy secretary at Ext. 4072 during normal working hours or Emergency assessment team on EXT. 5136 out of hours.

## 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.

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre  
7A Block R-3, Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan.  
Tel: 042 359 5000 | UAN: 111 155 555  
[www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk](http://www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk)

# Radiotherapy to the Bladder



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



**Shaukat Khanum**  
Memorial Cancer Hospital  
and Research Centre

Information for Patients

## Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have been recommended treatment with radiotherapy to the bladder. It is intended, only as a guide because the timing and effects of treatment may vary from one person to another. This leaflet will highlight the key points of the discussions you will have had with your doctor and treatment team. Family members and friends may also find it helpful.

## Treatment plan

The timing of the radiotherapy in your treatment plan may depend on your individual situation.

## Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy can be given to control the growth of the tumour and even lead to a cure.

The course of radiotherapy is given daily (Monday to Friday) over four to seven weeks. Your doctor will discuss the treatment, its duration and possible side effects with you.

## 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 anything is worrying you, however small, during your treatment, please tell your therapy radiographer or radiotherapy nurse practitioner, either at your visit or by phoning the department.

## Bladder

The bladder can be irritated by the radiotherapy causing increased feeling of wanting to pass urine, straining to pass urine or a burning feeling as you pass urine. This may feel like cystitis (a bladder infection). It will help to

drink plenty of fluids – at least double your normal intake. It is best to avoid drinking lots of tea or coffee. Some people find a glass of cranberry juice a day helpful, although you should not drink cranberry juice if you are taking anti-coagulants. These symptoms usually progress through the course of radiotherapy. Most people feel back to normal six weeks after treatment.

## Bowel habits

Diarrhoea can start after about two weeks of treatment and last for several weeks after treatment ends. Some patients pass mucus (clear jelly like fluid) in addition to the diarrhoea. You may also experience an urgent need to open your bowels, increased “wind” or intermittent abdominal cramps. You may feel bloated. It is important to keep eating and drinking as normally as possible although it may be necessary to adapt your diet to avoid high fibre foods. Your treatment team can advise regarding medications which might relieve these problems.

## Skin reaction

The skin in the area treated with radiotherapy can become red, drier or more sensitive.

## Tiredness

You may feel tired especially toward the end of a course of treatment. Listen to your body and if necessary allow yourself extra time to rest. The tiredness usually wears off over a few weeks once the treatment ends, but in some individuals may take longer. It may help to remain as active as you can but be aware of your limitations.

## Loss of hair in genital area

During radiotherapy you may lose some of your pubic hair. When you have finished the course of treatment, the hair will usually grow back but may be thinner than it was.

## Sexual effects

Radiotherapy can sometimes cause physical changes that may affect your sex life and it is normal to lose

interest in the physical aspect of your relationship for some months. It is possible to continue with sexual intercourse. If you are having problems it may help to talk these over with your partner and your treatment team. Although it can be embarrassing to talk to your team about such intimate things remember they are used to dealing with these issues and can give helpful advice.

**Women** - The vagina may become irritated causing discomfort, soreness and narrowing. You may notice an increase in vaginal discharge. Please let the treatment team know if this is very heavy and/or has an offensive odour.

Usually the side effects you have experienced may become worse for a short while and slowly settle over a few weeks. Please do not worry as this is quite normal. During this time you should continue to follow the advice you have been given during your treatment. Continue to take any prescribed medication for the side effects until they settle down.

## Possible 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.

## Bowel

Long-term bowel damage is uncommon. If it occurs, you may continue to feel the urge to go more often or that you need to open your bowels urgently. Your stools may be looser. Rarely, people may need to wear pads and very rarely it may be felt that a stoma will help your condition. Your treatment team can discuss some helpful changes to lifestyle or medication.

The blood vessels in the bowel can become more fragile, resulting in blood in the stool. If you notice any blood it's important to let your doctor know so that tests can be done and the appropriate treatment given.