

Treatment Delivery

Usually a patient is positioned on a bed or treatment chair. The radiographer may use a special pillow to help the patient to maintain a stable position and then precisely position the treatment applicator on the area of skin to be treated.

The role of the treatment applicator is to hold the source of radiation in the correct place over the skin during the treatment delivery stage and to reduce the radiation to other nearby areas.

The applicators are designed to provide a close and reproducible fit to the surface of the skin.

In some cases a custom-made applicator will be used from a plaster mould of the skin.

Post-procedure monitoring

A follow-up appointment will be scheduled around 6 weeks after the last fraction has been delivered.

This appointment is to check that the treatment is going well and to monitor for any possible side effects. Typically follow up visits are scheduled every 3 to 6 months for the first year and thereafter once per year.

Please remember we are here to help.

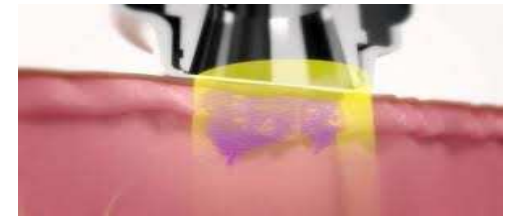
If you have any queries, please phone 01522 572243 to speak to a brachytherapy radiographer.

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk



Skin Brachytherapy



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What does brachytherapy for skin cancer involve?

The aim of this leaflet is to explain the treatment procedure for skin brachytherapy.

Brachytherapy delivers the radiation with a high degree of precision. Due to this accurate positioning we can exactly determine to which depth irradiation is required, healthy tissue is spared whilst the tumour gets a high dose of radiation. This minimises damage to healthy surrounding tissues.

Brachytherapy reduces the amount of radiation to healthy tissues and can be delivered in a much shorter treatment time.

Brachytherapy not only provides good cosmetic results but has also been shown to be highly effective in preventing the skin cancer from returning.

Basal cell cancers that have not spread to other parts of the body can be treated effectively with brachytherapy.



How much treatment will I need?

Radiotherapy with a brachytherapy treatment system is a painless procedure and can be carried out without an anaesthetic.

Brachytherapy is typically delivered in a series of treatments (also known as 'fractions') – most people will receive 6 to 8 fractions.

Brachytherapy treatment can be completed in a relatively short space of time, usually over the course of 2 to 4 weeks.

Treatment is given on an outpatient basis. This means you will not need an overnight stay in hospital.

Brachytherapy is therefore a very convenient form of skin cancer treatment.

Treatment delivery usually lasts only a couple of minutes per session after which a patient can return immediately to his or her daily life.



Stages of Treatment

There are three main stages to the brachytherapy procedure: Planning, Treatment delivery and Post-procedure monitoring.

Planning

The planning stage involves a thorough examination of the skin cancer and surrounding area.

Ultrasound will be used to gain an accurate picture of the layers of the skin and the precise position and thickness of the tumour. The doctor calculates how much radiation is needed to treat the cancer and where the radiation should be placed over the skin. In some cases, especially with larger lesions or lesions on a very irregular surface, a mould of the skin may be taken.

This enables the brachytherapy team to create a custom-made device to accurately place the radiation on the skin.

