

## Notes/Questions:

## References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email [patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto: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](mailto:patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk)

Excellence in rural healthcare



# Radiotherapy to the Brain

Lincolnshire Oncology Centre  
Radiotherapy  
Chemotherapy (Ingham Suite)  
Lincoln County Hospital  
01522 572268  
[www.ulh.nhs.uk](http://www.ulh.nhs.uk)

The aim of this leaflet is to support you during your treatment and remind you of the information given by your doctor and radiographers.

## What is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy is the controlled and precise use of radiation to treat cancer and some non-cancerous conditions. **External Beam Radiotherapy is delivered using a machine called a Linear Accelerator (Linac).** The radiation is given through the skin to the area affected, often from multiple directions. This is completely painless and treatment takes minutes.

Radiotherapy is often used in combination with surgery, chemotherapy and/or hormone therapy and each person's treatment is different and planned individually.



**If you have a pacemaker or ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator) please let staff know. This is important information when planning your treatment.**

The DVLA will take back your licence and issue you with a new one, once you are declared fit to drive again by your doctor. This is a legal requirement, your insurance will be invalidated and you could incur a fine of up to £1000.

The DVLA can be contacted at DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1TU or you can contact them by phone on 0300 790 6806, Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 5.30pm and Saturday from 8.00am to 1.00pm.

**Full details and advice are also available on the website at: [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk).**

## Care in the Sun

After radiotherapy, the area treated will always be more sensitive to the sun. It is advisable to wear a hat and always wear a high factor sun cream. You should not use a sunbed.

## Steroids

**It is common to have steroids as part of your treatment.**

Steroids are used to help reduce swelling and pressure. It is likely that you will remain on your current steroid dose whilst on treatment, as radiotherapy can also cause some swelling and inflammation in the treatment area.

**Please let staff know if you are having any headaches, nausea (feeling sick), visual disturbances or limb weakness as sometimes your steroids may need adjusting during treatment.**

## Seeing Your Doctor

**You will see your consultant each week to check how you are feeling during your treatment,** but you can always speak to the Radiographers you will see each day about any concerns. We also advise if you are feeling unwell and your appointment is after 4pm, to always contact the department as soon as possible so that we can advise and support you.

## Follow-up

You will be seen by your consultant 4-8 weeks after completing your treatment. This appointment will be where you were originally seen (i.e. not always in Lincoln).

On your last day of treatment you will also be given a finishing letter from the department. This letter has contact numbers for the doctors secretaries and also the radiotherapy department, if you have any queries before your follow-up appointment.

## Driving

**All drivers who have a brain tumour must contact the Driving Vehicular Licencing Authority (DVLA) and inform them of their diagnosis.**

## Preparing For Your Treatment

If you currently smoke, then stopping smoking before you start your radiotherapy is one of the best things you can do to help yourself. **Smoking can worsen side effects from Radiotherapy and also limit the effectiveness of treatment.**

There is help available to support you.

**QUIT 51 Stop Smoking Service.** Please ring **0800 622 6968** OR text 'smokefree' to **66777** to refer yourself to the service.

**If you are unable to stop smoking completely then we advise stopping for 2 hours before and 2 hours after your treatment.**

**It is important to eat a well-balanced healthy diet with plenty of fluids while preparing for and having treatment.** If you are having problems with your appetite or need any advice please speak to the staff.

**Staying active is very important.** The benefits of exercise are not just physical. Exercise can help lift your mood and help to alleviate fatigue. A gentle walk, gardening or house work can help to keep you more active, but it is important to listen to your body.

## Getting to the Department

The Radiotherapy Department is the large building to the left of Main Reception, opposite the staff car park. There is a coffee/snack shop (open from 9.00am until 3.00pm). There are toilets and water available in our waiting room.

## Reception

**When you first arrive you will need to book in to reception.**

On your first visit a Radiographer will come and explain what will happen and answer any questions and our receptionists are always happy to assist you.

**There is free parking for all people having Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy.** Our reception staff will validate your parking ticket each day as you leave the department.

**If you park in the Disabled Car Park,** you will need to take your blue badge in to the Main Reception on your first visit and they will reimburse you. On subsequent visits (for treatment), the oncology receptionists will issue you a card with your treatment dates on it to display alongside your blue badge in the car.

## Arranging Transport

**If you are able to get to the hospital, either by car or by public transport, this is the preferred option.** This is perfectly acceptable unless your doctor has advised you otherwise. There are regular buses that come in to the hospital site, please see the stage coach website for details.

<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/>

There is also a service called **Call Connect**, which is a minibus service that can be booked from around Lincolnshire - see the website below for details:

[www.lincsinterconnect.com](http://www.lincsinterconnect.com)

There are also voluntary car schemes which can be booked via the Lincolnshire County Council website. Please note there is a subsidised charge to this service.

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/.../community-transport/28561.article>

**If you have problems travelling from home each day, we may be able to offer help with transport.** Please note that there are criteria for ambulance bookings and you may not be eligible. If you use the ambulance service, you should be aware that you

**finished.** This lethargy can also affect your mood and emotions. Keeping active can help combat fatigue but it is important to listen to your body and rest if you feel unwell.

## Hair Loss

**You will lose your hair in the area being treated.** This normally happens 2 to 3 weeks after starting radiotherapy. Hair loss can be permanent or patchy and can take 4-5 months to re-grow. Some people prefer to wear a hat or a scarf but many people organise a wig.

**There is a Wig Bank** available at both Lincoln and Grantham Hospices. This is a free service and includes styling by a hairdresser.

For further details:	Lincoln	01522 518219
	Grantham	01476 513545

**You can also purchase your own wig via the hospital.** We will give you a referral form and a letter with a choice of approved provider. This will cost £67.75 and the wig is fitted and styled for you.

## Nausea

**Radiotherapy can make you feel sick.** It can be helpful to try foods with ginger in them for example; ginger biscuits, ginger beer or stem ginger. Peppermint products can also help but we can organise medication if needed.

## Medications

**It is important to continue with any medications that you usually take** and it would be helpful if you could bring a list of your current medications when you start your treatment please.

weekly blood tests as this tablet can affect your normal blood levels.

## Seizures or Fits

You may already have been experiencing seizures or fits, which are now controlled by an anti-epileptic medication. It is important to continue this medication but be aware that radiotherapy can cause the return or increased frequency of seizures or fits. This is because radiotherapy causes inflammation or swelling as it works. **Please continue with your medication and let staff know of any changes you have noticed.**

## Possible Side Effects

Radiotherapy affects people in different ways and you may experience different side effects to someone having similar treatment to you. Radiotherapy is a localised treatment, which means only the area having treatment will be affected.

**Radiotherapy has a build-up effect and often people do not notice any side effects until about 10 days into a course but this also means that side effects will continue for a couple of weeks after treatment too.** Some patients may have some permanent side effects from treatment but this will be discussed with you.

## Skin

**Most people will have a skin reaction**, but this will vary from mild redness to feeling quite sore with some skin peeling. We tend to see worse reactions where there are natural skin folds or friction, for example, behind the ears. It is fine to wash as normal and for you to continue with your usual shampoo and conditioner.

## Fatigue

**You may feel tired or lethargic during your radiotherapy treatment and for some weeks after your treatment has**

will be away from home for at least half a day. Transport is for the benefit of patients only and escorts may only be booked in exceptional circumstances; please discuss this with the staff.

## Treatment Planning

**Your first appointment will be a planning session.** This will be in our **CT Scanner** (pictured). This scan allows us to plan exactly where you will have your treatment and the best position for you to lie in.



**We may use contrast (a special dye that gives us better pictures) at your scan appointment.**

This will be given through a cannula into a vein in your arm. This will involve a sharp scratch but should be relatively painless.

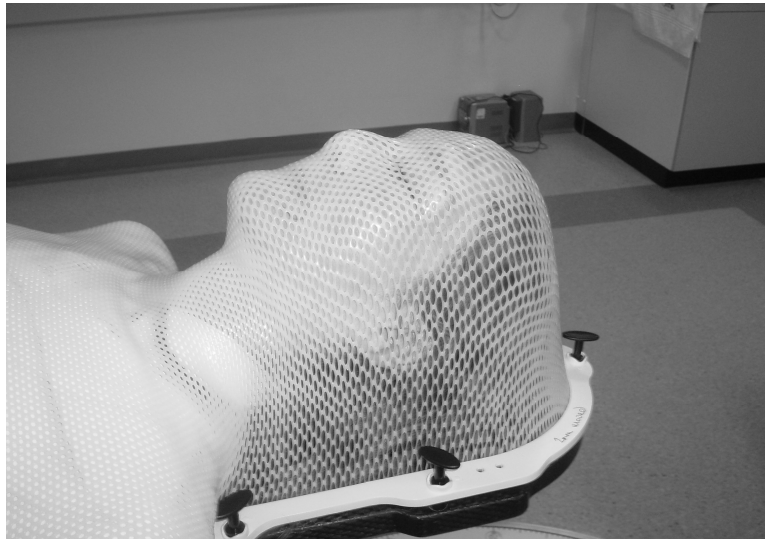
**It is important to drink well in the days before your appointment so that you are well hydrated. This is also important for a few days after your scan, to help your body flush out the contrast.**

**If you are a diabetic, taking Metformin, you will need to contact the department to check if you need to stop taking this before or after the scan.**

The staff will explain the procedure fully when you attend for your appointment but if you have any queries please contact the department before your appointment.

If it is difficult to find a vein and staff are unable to place the cannula or you are unable to have contrast, for medical reasons, we can still scan and plan your treatment without contrast.

We will need to make a cast of your head to hold you in the right position for treatment (pictured).



This cast or mask will need to be worn each day for your treatment and is made from a thermoplastic material with holes in it, so that you can breathe as normal.

The material is heated and then a Radiographer will place it over your face and head and it stretches and moulds to your shape. It

feels like a warm flannel and as it cools it hardens to hold you in the correct position. This takes a few minutes and then it is ready.

It may feel snug but we need it to fit well for treatment and some of the marks for treatment will be drawn on to the mask.

## Planning

**There may be a number of weeks between your planning appointment and starting treatment.** It takes time to plan your treatment. This is a complicated process that involves a number of staff but ensures the best treatment for you.

## Treatment

The number of treatments, sometimes called fractions, varies and will be discussed with you by your Doctor. Radiotherapy is usually given as an out-patient with daily treatments from Monday to Friday each week.

**Treatment is painless and very quick (minutes)** and although the Radiographers leave the room to treat you, they can see you on closed circuit cameras at all times.

**It is important that you keep as still as possible and breathe normally** but if you need the Radiographers during your treatment, please raise your hand and they will come straight to you.

**You will not be radioactive during your treatment and it is safe for you to be with other people, including children.**

## Temozolamide

**You may be taking this chemotherapy tablet daily as part of your treatment.** Your Doctor or Specialist Nurse will advise you how to take this and about any side effects. You will also need