

Useful Numbers:

Radiotherapy (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm)

Tel:01522 572268

Lung Clinical Nurse Specialists:

Lincoln 01522 573041

Grantham 01476 464503

Boston 01205 446294

Upper Digestive System Clinical Nurse Specialist:

Lincoln 01522 572351

Out of Hours/Bank Holidays

Waddington Unit

Tel: 01522 572255/572257

Helpful Websites:

Lincolnshire Oncology Centre

www.ulh.nhs.uk/services/cancer-services/

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk/

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

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

Excellence in rural healthcare



Radiotherapy to the Chest

Lincolnshire Oncology Centre
Radiotherapy
Chemotherapy (Ingham Suite)
Lincoln County Hospital
01522 572268
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.

Important Information

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

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) pictured below. 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 and chemotherapy. Each person's treatment is different and planned individually.



Notes/Questions:

Care in the Sun

After radiotherapy, the area treated will always be more sensitive to the sun. It is advisable to keep this area covered for the first year after radiotherapy and then always wear a high factor sun cream. You should not use a sunbed.

Final Note

The staff in the Oncology Department are here to help you. If you have any problems or worries, please seek our help and advice.

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 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.

Parking

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

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

Chest Discomfort

You may notice some discomfort or aching in your chest as the treatment can cause some inflammation. This is normal but please speak to staff so that we can advise medication.

Fatigue

You may feel tired or lethargic during your radiotherapy treatment and for a number of weeks after your treatment has 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 if you feel unwell, to rest.

Your normal activities at home will help to keep you active and if you feel able, a daily gentle walk can be beneficial.

Potential Late Side Effects

Long term side effects can occur months or years after radiotherapy treatment. These are hard to predict but would be permanent changes. We plan the treatment to avoid surrounding areas as much as possible to minimise the risk of these side effects.

Breathlessness

Inflammation (pneumonitis) and scarring (fibrosis) of the lung can lead to breathlessness. This is because the lungs are less stretchy after treatment.

Narrowing of your food pipe (oesophagus)

Treatment can cause narrowing of your food pipe which can affect swallowing. For some people a minor procedure where the food pipe is stretched (dilatation) is possible or more rarely surgery.

You will be seen once a week by a Review Radiographer, who will advise you about any other care for your skin.

Nausea

Radiotherapy to the chest can make you feel sick. If you do notice this, 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. Please speak to the staff.

Difficulty swallowing/Indigestion

You may notice some difficulty swallowing towards the end of your treatment. Some people describe this as feeling like food is sticking or the tube carrying your food (oesophagus) feels narrower. Eating softer foods will help, as well as drinking plenty of fluids and we can also organise medication to ease this. Please speak to the staff.

Loss of Appetite

It is common to lose your appetite during treatment. We advise eating small meals/snacks more frequently and we can refer you to a dietitian to advise and support you.

Cough

You may already have a cough or you may develop a cough during your treatment. This can be a dry, tickly cough or it may be a productive cough and you may cough up some phlegm or a little blood. This is normal. Drinking plenty will help and some people find a simple cough syrup is soothing. If you notice the phlegm changes colour or you have a temperature, please let staff know as in this case you may need a course of antibiotics.

you use the ambulance service you should be aware that you 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. This scan allows us to plan exactly where you will have your treatment and the best position for you to lie in. We will ask to make some permanent skin marks (little ink dots) to help position you accurately for each treatment.



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.

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.

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).

You will also be given a finishing letter from the department with information and contact numbers for once you are finished.

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, in the armpit and under the breast.

It is fine to wash as normal and for you to continue with your usual soap, shower gel, deodorant and body lotions. We do ask that you avoid Talcum powder, Medicated/Antibiotic creams, Extremes of temperature (hot water bottles/ice packs).