

If you have concerns about any of the following, we suggest you contact your GP (if they last more than a few days):

- Unusual rashes, bruises or bleeding
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation
- Unexplained loss of appetite or weight
- Unusual lumps or swellings
- A persistent cough or fever
- Pain that does not go away and cannot be controlled by normal painkillers.

If you need to contact your GP, or others, the following information may be useful:

- Area of the body treated: • Number of treatments
- Date treatment was completed • Why you had treatment, e.g. to cure the cancer or to try to help your symptoms.

Useful numbers

Clinical Nurse Specialist _____

Maggie's Centres:

Edinburgh: 0131 537 3131; Fife: 01592 647 997

www.maggiescentres.org/our-centres/maggies-online-centre/

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00 (9am - 8pm).

www.macmillan.org.uk

Centres:

Edinburgh Western General: 0131 537 3907

elaine.gray@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Westerhaven, WesterHailes: 0131 453 9400

Reception.westerhaven@gmail.com

West Lothian: 01506 777 604 or 777 602

Rosie.small@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

West Lothian Macmillan Advice Team: 01506 282 900

macmillan@westlothian.gov.uk

Macmillan mobile service: mobileinfounit@macmillan.org.uk

Borders Macmillan Centre: 01896 826 888 or 826 835

Claire.irvine@borders.nhs.uk

Dumfries Macmillan Centre: 01387 241978 or 241979

Claire.drummond@nhs.net

After radiotherapy: what now? A guide for patients

Now that you are approaching the end of your course of radiotherapy, there are several things you will need to be aware of over the coming weeks.

Side-effects

Radiotherapy continues to work even after treatment has finished. Any side-effects you have, or have been advised to expect, may continue to develop for 7-14 days after your final treatment. Sometimes side-effects get worse during this time, but they will gradually settle. Be patient, as they can take several weeks, or a couple of months, to settle completely.

Please continue to follow any specific advice you were given during your treatment or by your clinical team.

If you have any questions or concerns about your recent radiotherapy treatment you can contact the radiotherapy department on this number:

0131 537 3725 (9am-5pm) If you leave a message and your number we will ring you back.

Skin care

Please follow the skin care advice you received during your treatment. You will need to do this for two to three weeks, or until any irritation subsides. Please remember that your skin reaction will peak after 7-14 days before it starts to improve. You may have been given creams already, but if not and the skin becomes dry and itchy, apply a moisturiser such as Diprobase, E45 or Aveeno, twice each day. Avoid perfumed soaps, creams or lotions, in the area until the reaction has settled.

If your skin breaks down or becomes weepy during this time and you would like further advice, contact your clinical nurse specialist or GP. **Remember:** your skin in this area will remain sensitive for some time and we recommend that you protect it from the sun. Always use a high factor sun cream (50+) on this area of skin when in the sun.

If your head has been treated, avoid hair products or dyes until any reaction has settled. You can start using them once the skin on your scalp is back to normal. Use gentler products at first.

Diet

If you have been advised to change your diet, please continue with the modified diet for the next few weeks. After this, when your symptoms have settled, you can gradually return to your normal diet. In general, we recommend a health balanced diet with lots of fruit, vegetables and nuts to ensure you get all the vitamins and minerals your body needs.

Medication

If you have been prescribed any medications during your treatment, please continue taking them as prescribed. If you run out or are unsure of how long to take them for, please discuss this with your clinical nurse specialist or GP. If you are taking oxetecaine liquid and run out, please contact your nurse specialist, as it is not available in community pharmacies.

Tiredness (fatigue)

If you have felt tired during your treatment, this is likely to continue after treatment has finished, and may last for a few weeks or up to several months. Everyone experiences this differently, so don't be concerned if it takes some time for you to get back to feeling normal. Sometimes after treatment you can get more tired before it gets better. It is important that you allow yourself time to rest and recover.

Be prepared to rest when you need to and do not rush to return to your usual routine too soon. Gentle exercise such as walking may also help with tiredness or fatigue.

Emotions

Finishing treatment can be a positive, but also an emotional, time. Some people feel isolated and low in mood. This is often due to the reduced contact with the hospital and having more time to reflect on your illness. It can also be difficult to cope with side-effects on your own. Please do not hesitate to seek advice and support at this time. Your clinical nurse specialist can advise what support is available.

Follow-up

The schedule of follow-up varies, depending on the type and stage of your cancer. Your clinical team will advise you when they will see you. If you are worried about this, please talk to your clinical nurse specialist. It will be several weeks before we can see how you responded to your treatment and any side-effects have gone, so any scans or tests you need will normally be done a few months after your treatment ends.

When to seek further advice

It is quite common to find that you are more aware of any slight change in your body or niggles you may feel. These things are usually due to normal everyday ailments or illnesses, but they may make you worry that your cancer is coming back. This is quite normal and these feelings will settle as time passes. You can contact your clinical nurse specialist or GP for reassurance.