

- **Cough** – this may be caused by the X-ray irritating lung tissue.
- **Shortness of breath** – may be noticed during treatment and for a week or two afterwards.

### Are there any long term side effects?

These effects may occur months or years after your treatment has finished. Improved planning and treatment techniques have made these long term side effects less likely to happen.

- **Lung fibrosis** – thickening and scarring of the lung tissue which can cause increased breathlessness and coughing.
- **Pericarditis** – this is inflammation of the membrane surrounding the heart, and there is a small risk of this happening if the heart is within the treatment area.
- **Damage to spine** – the spine can tolerate a certain amount of X-ray exposure and great care is taken both during planning and delivery of radiotherapy to ensure this amount is not exceeded.

### General advice

Everyone having radiotherapy is different. Your treatment is specific to you and so is the way you react to treatment. If you are worried about anything at all, however trivial it may seem, please mention it to the radiographers and we may be able to help.

### Data protection

All personal images and photographs taken during radiotherapy will be used in accordance with this Trust's policy on the protection and use of patient information.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690



# Radiotherapy to the chest



The name of your consultant is:

.....

The radiographer who explained the treatment to you is:

.....

You can contact us on:

Tel: 01872 258340 – 9am to 5pm

### What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy treats cancer by using high energy X-rays. These X-rays destroy cancer cells while doing as little harm as possible to normal cells. Radiotherapy is completely painless and usually takes between 10–12 minutes.

### How often will I need treatment?

Radiotherapy is usually given daily during the week with a break at weekends. The course of treatment may last from one week to six weeks. Your oncologist (cancer specialist) will discuss with you how many treatments you need and why.

### What is a planning scan?

Before you start radiotherapy it is essential that we plan very carefully where the treatment is to be given. The most accurate way of doing this is by doing a CT scan. This scan is done in the oncology department and usually takes between 10 – 20 minutes.

It may be necessary to give you an injection of contrast during the scanning process. The contrast enhances the CT image to enable your oncologist to plan the scan as accurately as possible. The contrast is given via a cannula (fine tube) which is inserted into a vein in your arm or hand.

### What happens on my first day of treatment?

1. One of the radiographers will collect you from the waiting room and explain exactly how the treatment will be given.
2. You will then be taken into the treatment room and asked to lie on the couch in the same position as you were for the CT scan. You will need to remove your clothes from the waist up. You may prefer to change into a gown in the changing room before going into the treatment room. Women may remove their bra and wear a vest into the treatment room which can then be pulled down once they are lying on the couch.
3. The radiographers will spend some time ensuring you are lying in the correct position and that the treatment machine is correctly aligned. You will be asked to lie still and breathe normally.
4. The radiographers then have to leave the room to switch on the X-rays, but are able to see and hear you all the time.
5. A short CT scan (CBCT) will be taken before the treatment starts. This will be done for the first four days and then weekly although occasionally it is done more frequently.

You will have the option to see a Review Radiographer each week to discuss any side effects you may be experiencing. You may need routine blood tests during your treatment.

### What side effects can I expect?

#### Short term side effects

These are likely to happen during and immediately after radiotherapy. We will monitor these side effects carefully. You will see a review radiographer or your oncologist weekly throughout your treatment.

- **Nausea** – you will be given anti-sickness tablets to help prevent this.
- **Dysphagia** – this is inflammation of the oesophagus. This causes pain on swallowing. You will be given medicine to help ease this.
- **Tiredness** – which may be worse the week after radiotherapy.
- **Skin redness** – wash the treatment area gently using non-perfumed soap and apply non-perfumed moisture cream if the area feels sore or itchy.