

After radiotherapy to your prostate

This leaflet provides you with information on what you may experience now you have completed radiotherapy to the prostate.

How long will the side effects continue?

The peak reaction of radiotherapy occurs 10-14 days after treatment finishes. This means that side effects can continue for several weeks after treatment finishes. For some men, it may take longer for these to settle.

Tiredness (fatigue)

It is common to feel tired towards the end of radiotherapy treatment and after radiotherapy finishes. The effects of fatigue vary between different people and so does the length of time it takes to subside.

Fatigue is not always relieved by rest alone. Try to maintain your normal sleeping pattern. Sometimes a little gentle exercise can help to relieve the symptoms of fatigue.

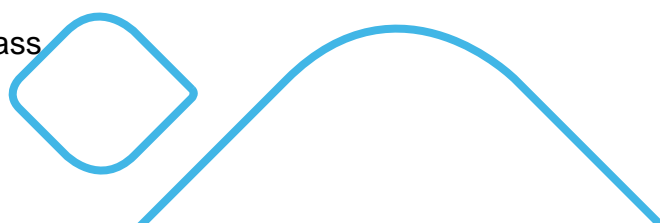
Prostate Cancer UK has a telephone support service called 'Get back on track' that can help with managing fatigue. You can contact them on 0800 0748383 for more information.

Bowel symptoms

[If you are using this template to write a patient information fact sheet, use the Information text font style – Arial 12pt] If you are suffering from bowel symptoms as a result of radiotherapy, these may continue for several weeks after treatment finishes.

Side effects may include:

- Diarrhoea or loose bowels
- Pain or discomfort in the back passage
- The urge to empty your bowels but nothing to pass



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- Passing mucous or small amounts of blood from your rectum
 - Constipation

Loose bowels

- Drink plenty of water to replace the fluid you lose when having diarrhoea
- Continue to use loperamide as directed by your oncologist.
- Continue to follow the low fibre diet as directed by radiographers. Please ask the radiographers for the 'Managing your side effects of radiotherapy – bowels' information leaflet if you have not already been given one of these.
- Take care of your rectal area, using unperfumed baby wipes instead of toilet paper

Constipation

- Drink plenty of water to help soften the stool.
- Avoid high fat and greasy foods, spicy foods and caffeine drinks such as tea and coffee, cola and energy drinks.
- Continue to follow the low fibre diet as directed by radiographers. Please ask the radiographers for the 'Managing your side effects of radiotherapy – bowels' information leaflet if you have not already been given one of these.

Bladder irritation

Bladder irritation during radiotherapy can cause you to pass urine more frequently, also sometimes accompanied with urgency or a burning sensation. This can continue for several weeks after radiotherapy treatment has finished.

- Increase your fluid intake – ideally drinking 2 litres daily.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Continue to take any medication as directed by your oncologist.
- Please ask radiographers for a Prostate Cancer UK 'Urgent' toilet card.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

These exercises can help with some of the urinary and bowel symptoms you may be experiencing after radiotherapy treatment. They may also help if you are having problems keeping an erection after treatment for prostate cancer.

It is important to find the right muscles before you start doing pelvic floor muscle exercises.

- Tighten the ring of muscle around the opening of your back passage as if you're trying to control wind and then relax. Try not to squeeze your buttocks together or tighten your thigh muscles or stomach muscles. Try not to hold your breath.



- At the same time, imagine you're urinating and tighten your muscles as if you're trying to stop mid-flow and then relax.
- If you're tightening the right muscles, you should feel your scrotum move up a little. You might find it helpful to do the exercises in front of the mirror to begin with.

There is no fixed advice on how often you should do pelvic floor muscle exercises but don't overdo it. Pelvic floor muscles can get tired if you do too many exercises. It takes time to see an improvement in symptoms. You might see an improvement each week, but it can take up to three months before you see a real difference.

Ask radiographers or your clinical nurse specialist for the Prostate Cancer UK 'Pelvic floor muscle exercises' booklet for more information.

Hormone therapy

You may also be on hormone therapy as part of your treatment for prostate cancer.

Patients will have different durations of hormone therapy, so continue with these as directed by your oncologist. If you are not sure about the duration of your hormone treatment, please ask the radiographers or your clinical nurse specialist who will be able to find out for you.

The side effects of hormone therapy will continue whilst you remain on hormone treatment and it can take several months for them to wear off. There are ways to manage these side effects.

. Side effects from hormone therapy can include

- Erection problems
- Losing your desire for sex (libido)
- Hot flushes
- Weight gain
- Mood changes

Please ask the radiographers or your clinical nurse specialist if you would like more information about side effects of hormone therapy or how to manage them.

What appointments will I have now?

You will have an appointment with the urology clinical nurse specialist 4-6 weeks after finishing your radiotherapy treatment. This is to see how you are feeling, offer advice on any side effects you are still experiencing and answer any questions you may have.

[If you have not received this appointment after finishing radiotherapy treatment, contact the urology department for more information \(contact details on the back page of this leaflet\).](#)

You will see your clinical oncologist approximately 3 months after finishing radiotherapy.

[Please visit your GP 2 weeks before this appointment and ask for a PSA test so that the result is available when you see your oncologist.](#)

In the meantime, if you have any concerns or questions, you can contact the radiographers, the clinical nurse specialist or your GP (contact details on the back page).

For further information and advice:

Radiotherapy Department

- LA2: 01225 82 5910
- LA3: 01225 82 1822
- Reception: 01225 82 4853
- Web: www.ruh.nhs.uk/patients/services/radiotherapy

Urology department

- Urology cancer nurse specialists 01225 824250
- Urology outpatients department 01225 825990

PocketMedic® have produced some patient information videos, available at www.medic.video/swe15-cancer (Life after cancer)

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01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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