

Guide for Patients having CyberKnife® treatment at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

Consent

It is a legal requirement to have a signed Consent Form from you before the start of your treatment.

If you have already been given one of these forms, please bring the completed form with you when you come for your first appointment.

If you have not been given a form, this will be discussed with you at your first appointment.

Identification

Please note that it is a legal requirement for the staff to check your name and details against your treatment sheet every time you attend.

Pregnancy/fathering a child

Female patients must not be pregnant or become pregnant and male patients must not father a child during a course of radiotherapy or for some months afterwards. **Please discuss this with your cancer specialist.**

If you think there is a chance, however small, of you or your partner becoming pregnant during treatment, it is extremely important that you discuss this with your oncologist, radiographer or nurse as soon as possible.

Female patients will be asked to confirm their pregnancy status prior to radiotherapy. This applies to all women between the ages of 12 - 55 years. This is a legal requirement.

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This leaflet has been written together with cancer specialists (oncologists), health professionals, patients and carers at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.
If necessary, you can receive this leaflet in larger print.

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Introduction

This booklet is a general guide for patients receiving CyberKnife treatment at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

We hope it will provide answers to a number of commonly asked questions. However, if there is anything in this leaflet which is unclear, or there are still questions which it does not answer, please contact a member of the team caring for you, to get more advice.

The CyberKnife is a radiotherapy machine which produces high energy x-rays. The treatment unit is supported on a robotic arm which allows the treatment to be given from any angle. It enables high doses of radiation to be delivered with extreme accuracy, as it has the ability to track the tumour's position throughout the treatment, even with small movements such as breathing.

CyberKnife treatment does not make you radioactive. It is perfectly safe for you to be with people, including children, as usual.

CyberKnife treatment is painless and is similar to having an X-ray taken. You should not see or feel anything during the time it takes to deliver the treatment.

Who will be looking after me?

A specialist cancer doctor is known as a clinical oncologist¹. The oncologist will plan and oversee your treatment, which will be carried out by therapy radiographers (health professionals who give radiotherapy) and their assistants.

Other people who may be looking after you during your treatment include:

- nurses / specialist nurses
- health care assistants
- counsellors
- dieticians
- medical physicists - specialists who make your treatment plan and radiation protection arrangements. They also take care of any other checks which are necessary before treatment begins, to make sure that the radiotherapy is safe and accurate.

¹ The term 'oncologist' refers to both your cancer specialist and any doctors working within his/her team.

What will happen during planning?

Before you begin your CyberKnife treatment you will visit the Radiotherapy Department to have your treatment planned. You may be in the department for a few hours.

Some patients may have to have tiny permanent metal markers, called fiducials, placed into or near the treatment area. If you need to have these, your Oncologist will discuss this with you. It is normally done as a day-case procedure at least a week before the planning appointment.

During this appointment you may have an immobilisation device made and / or a special support cushion made to fit you. This will help you stay in the correct position during treatment and make you more comfortable.

For your planning you will be placed in the position in which you will have your treatment. It should be comfortable enough to maintain for 30 minutes to 120 minutes (depending on the area you are having treated). For this reason it is important for you to say if your treatment position is not totally comfortable.

During this appointment you will have a CT scan done as part of the treatment planning process. An injection of a special dye may be needed.

Using the information from your planning visit, your individual treatment plan is then calculated.

Before you leave the radiotherapy centre on your planning day, you will be told about your treatment appointments (see page 12).

What happens during treatment?

Before you go into the treatment room, a member of the treatment team will explain to you what will happen and you will have a chance to ask questions.

During your treatment you will lie on the treatment couch, in the same position you were in for your planning scan.

When you are comfortable and in the right position, the radiographers will leave the room so that they can give you your treatment.

Each treatment may last between 30 minutes and 120 minutes, depending on the area being treated. You are welcome to bring a CD with you which can be played in the treatment room to help you relax.

You will be alone in the room during your treatment but the radiographers will be able to see you all the time through closed circuit television.

Radiotherapy is completely painless and you can breathe normally during your treatment. The radiographers will tell you how to contact them in case you need any help during treatment. It is possible to switch off the machine and interrupt your treatment at any time, if it becomes necessary.

Do I have to stay in hospital?

If you are able to travel to the hospital for treatment, there is no need for you to stay in hospital. Most people are treated as outpatients.

If you live a long way from the hospital, but do not need to be admitted, your oncologist may arrange for you to stay at

CHART Lodge. This is a hostel in the hospital grounds, near the treatment centre. Patients, relatives and friends can stay there. Further information can be provided on request.

What special care should I take during treatment?

Eating and drinking

It is important to continue to eat a normal healthy diet during your treatment. Try to drink up to two litres of fluid a day (which is the daily recommended intake).

Skin care

We recommend that you take special care of your skin in the treatment area before, during and for 2-4 weeks following your treatment (depending on your skin reaction).

Washing

You can take a bath or shower, but try not to have the water very hot or very cold. Do not soak in the bath. Do not add bubble bath, salts, oils or anything else to the water.

We suggest that you use either baby soap or a simple unperfumed soap when washing the area being treated. Aqueous cream can also be used for washing.

Whatever you use, put it on gently. It is better to use your hand than a sponge or flannel. Make sure you rinse your skin well with warm water.

Pat yourself dry with a very soft towel. Try not to rub your skin.

Aqueous cream

You will be given aqueous cream at your planning session. Put it on the area that is being treated twice a day, morning and evening. Start the week before your treatment begins. Put it on while you are having treatment and continue for 2 to 4 weeks after your treatment is completed. You do not need to wash it off before your treatment, as the cream will soak into your skin.

While you are having treatment, try to wear loose, comfortable clothing made from natural fibres such as cotton.

We recommend that you do not use talcum powder, deodorants or perfume in the area being treated. However there may be certain products you can use. Please ask your radiographer or staff at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC).

Also during your treatment do not swim in chlorinated water and do not take steam baths or use a Jacuzzi, as these may irritate your skin.

What are the side-effects of CyberKnife treatment?

CyberKnife treatment is given only to the area that needs the treatment, so side-effects are kept as few as possible. Your oncologist will explain the possible side-effects to you. If you are concerned about anything, please talk to your oncologist or to the radiographers treating you.

Skin reactions

Aqueous cream moisturises your skin and is used to reduce any side-effects from the treatment. Towards

the end of your treatment, or even after it has finished, you may find that your skin becomes red and itchy, as if you had sunburn. This can continue for two weeks after the end of your treatment, but it will gradually stop.

- Tiredness
- You may experience tiredness, or have less energy than normal, during and also following your treatment. Please see the factsheet 'Living with tiredness (fatigue)'.

What special care should I take after treatment?

- Diet
- It is important that you continue to eat well and drink plenty of fluids during and after your treatment. The Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) has information available on healthy eating.
- Swimming
- It is safe to swim after treatment, once your skin has recovered from any redness. This usually takes up to four weeks after treatment has finished.
- Sunbathing when treatment is finished
- Do not expose the treated area of your skin to the sun straight after the end of your treatment. You will need to apply a high protective factor sun cream to the area which has been treated for the rest of your life, because your skin will always be sensitive to the sun. In any case, it is not wise to become sunburnt on any part of your body.

Choosing your appointment time

Please ring the CyberKnife radiographers on 01923 844082 or 01923 844378 within 48 hours of receiving this leaflet to tell us the treatment time you would prefer. Please leave a message if there is no reply. Speak slowly and clearly leaving the following details:

- your full name (please spell your family name)
- your date of birth
- your daytime telephone number (in case we need to contact you)

Please also let us know if you have any holidays booked and we will try to fit in with your dates. However, appointment times will need to follow your treatment plan and require the presence of the CyberKnife team.

Appointment times will be confirmed at your planning session.

Follow-up care

You will be seen during your treatment by your oncologist or a member of his / her team.

When your treatment is over, you will have regular follow-up appointments. These will usually be with your Mount Vernon Cancer Centre oncologist or a doctor from his / her team at either the cancer centre or your district general hospital. You will be asked to have a follow-up scan, usually a few months following your treatment.

However, if you are concerned by any symptoms you may have between these appointments, please see your own GP, your oncologist or the CyberKnife radiographers at the Cancer Centre. (See page 15 for contact details.)

Car parking at the hospital

A Pay & Display parking scheme operates 24 hours a day. You may park free, for 30 minutes only, by pressing the green button on the Pay & Display machine. Patients attending the Cancer Centre can buy tokens at a reduced rate for the day, available from the Post Room located at the main hospital entrance next to Patient Affairs. Post Room opening hours are Monday - Friday, 8.30am - 4pm. You will need to show your appointment card/letter and have a pound coin for the token. Change is available in the Oak Tree Restaurant. Each token entitles you to park for up to ten hours.

Blue badge holders may park in a designated disabled bay or in any bay in a car park. They do not need to display a ticket but MUST display their badge for free parking.

Getting help with paying for transport

If you are on a low income, you may be eligible for help with paying for the cost of transport to and from the hospital. This includes bus and train fares and car mileage but not taxi costs.

For further information about eligibility, please speak to Patient Affairs (01923 844292) or visit www.direct.gov.uk and search for 'Travel costs'.

If you normally pay for NHS prescriptions

People undergoing treatment for cancer do not have to pay NHS prescription charges if they have a valid medical exemption certificate.

To get an exemption certificate, ask your GP for an application form.

Additional help and support

People who have had cancer will say that throughout their illness they experienced a range of emotions, expected and unexpected. Many find it to be a stressful, anxious and confusing time, both as individuals and within relationships.

Some patients find it helpful to meet and discuss their experiences with other patients who have been through similar treatment. If you would like to meet another patient, please speak to a team member.

Some patients find it harder than usual to make decisions. They may feel overwhelmed and forget about the good parts of their lives.

If you are finding it hard to make sense of your feelings, or if you experience any of the above reactions, you may find it helpful to talk to a trained health care professional, who may refer you for counselling. You can also go to the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) and ask to meet with a counsellor.

Counselling offers individual patients and/or their families and carers an opportunity to understand and manage their new experiences.

The LJMC provides support and information. It also offers a range of services including counselling, complementary therapies and relaxation sessions.

There is more information on the back of this leaflet.

This leaflet forms part of a series of publications produced by the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC).

If you would like further information about any aspect of cancer and its treatments, please drop in to the centre or call the Helpline.

The LJMC is staffed by healthcare professionals and trained volunteers and is part of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

- Drop-in centre for support and information
- Telephone Helpline
- Benefits Advice *
- Pre-treatment visits*
- Complementary therapies *
- Relaxation classes
- Counselling *
- Support groups
- Look Good...Feel Better™ beauty workshops

* These services are available to patients under the care of an NHS oncologist based at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

Opening hours: Mon - Fri: 9.30am - 1.00pm & 2.00 - 4.30pm

Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre
situated between the Cancer Centre and Gate 3 (White Hill)
Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2RN
Telephone Helpline: **01923 844014**
www.ljmc.org

Contacts

Your Oncologist is Dr/Prof:

Your hospital number:

Your treatment start date:

Length of your course of treatment:

Your Oncologist secretary:

Radiotherapy Clinic Nurses: 01923 844267

Radiotherapy Clinic Radiographers: 01923 844548

CyberKnife Treatment Unit..... 01923 844082

..... 01923 844378

Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre: 01923 844014

Your follow-up will be at:

