

CyberKnife® treatment to the spine

Information for patients at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

This leaflet **must be read with** the main CyberKnife® booklet PI72

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.

Upper Spine (neck area)

If you are having your upper spine (neck area) treated you will need to have a mask called an 'immobilisation shell' made. This shell will hold you in the correct position and help you to keep still, to ensure accuracy during treatment.

A radiographer will show you an example of what it looks like and explain how it is made.

Lower spine

If you are having a lower part of your spine treated you will not need to have a mask made. You will have a special support cushion made to fit you. This will help you stay in the correct position during treatment and make you more comfortable.

Planning

You will need to have a CT scan and possibly an MRI scan, which are used for planning your treatment.

You will be asked to lie in the same position as you will be in for your treatment. This position should be comfortable so you can keep still for between 30-60 minutes. For this reason it is important for you to say if your treatment position is not totally comfortable.

You will receive a phone call with your treatment appointment dates and times.

What are the possible side-effects from having treatment to the spine?

- Hair loss
If you are having your cervical spine treated there is a possibility that you may lose some hair during the treatment. Your oncologist will advise you if this may happen.
- Difficulty with swallowing
If you are having your upper spine treated you may experience some soreness when you swallow. Your oncologist will advise you if this may happen.
- Nausea
If you are having your lower spine treated, you may find you experience some nausea. There are many anti-sickness drugs that can be used to try to prevent this from becoming a problem. Please speak to the radiographers who are treating you.
- Bowel frequency
If you are having your lower spine treated it is possible that the treatment will increase the number of times that you open your bowels each day.
However, if you are passing loose stools more than four times each day then please speak to the radiographers treating you and they can refer you to your oncologist or the clinic radiographer.

Please read about the general side-effects from having CyberKnife treatment on page 10 of the CyberKnife® booklet (PI72).

Other help and support

People who have cancer often say that during their illness they experience a range of emotions. Many find it to be a stressful, anxious and confusing time.

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

The staff at the LJMC work as part of the overall team caring for you and include healthcare professionals and trained volunteers. The centre provides a relaxed setting in which to talk and ask questions.

The LJMC is situated between the main Cancer Centre building and Gate 3 (White Hill).

 **Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre**
... supporting people affected by cancer...

Services offered at the LJMC include:

- ① Drop-in centre
- ① Telephone helpline
- ① Benefits advice*
- ① Complementary therapies*
- ① Relaxation classes
- ① Counselling*
- ① Look Good...Feel Better™ beauty workshops
- ① The Way Ahead headwear workshops
- ① Self-help courses

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

Mon-Fri: **9.30am–4.30pm**

Telephone Helpline: **020 3826 2555**

Website: **www.ljmc.org**