

Brachytherapy department

Treatment to the skin using a plastic treatment mould

This leaflet is written for people who are having a type of radiotherapy called brachytherapy used for treatment of a skin tumour using a skin mould. Before you start your treatment, we will explain to you what the treatment involves, what the side effects are, and ask if you are willing to proceed.

You will usually have the treatment preparation and treatment as an outpatient at The Christie in Withington. Treatment schedules vary between patients and may involve treatment once or twice a day, for about 20 minutes at a time.

What is brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy treatment to the skin is delivered using a machine known as an afterloader. It contains a miniature source of radiation which can be brought close to the skin to treat tumours, and held in place using a specially prepared plastic mould.

Consent

We will ask you to sign a consent form agreeing to accept the treatment that you are being offered. The basis of the agreement is that you have had The Christie's written description of the proposed treatment and that you have been given an opportunity to discuss any concerns. You are entitled to request a second opinion from another doctor who specialises in treating this cancer. You can ask your own consultant or your GP to refer you.

Your consent may be withdrawn at any time before or during this treatment. Should you decide to withdraw your consent then a member of your treating team will discuss the possible consequences with you.

Preparation for treatment

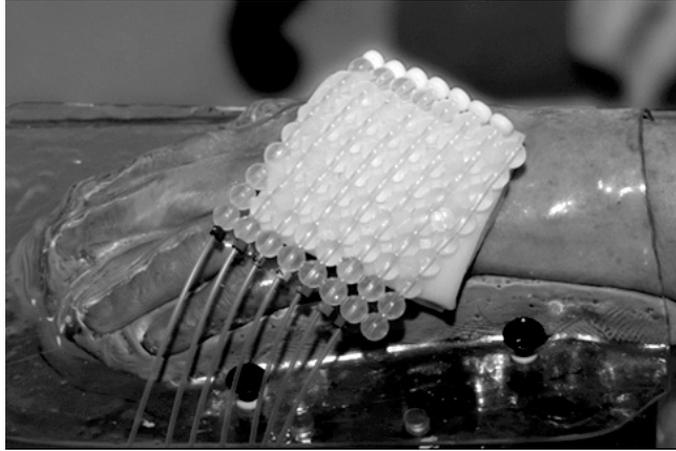
- Your doctor will explain the treatment and ask you to sign a consent form.
- To make sure that your treatment is delivered to the same area each day, a plastic mould is made of the area to be treated.
- The doctor will draw marks on your skin to show the treatment area – these marks must be kept so please take care when washing. The marks may rub off onto your clothing, so it's a good idea to wear older clothes.
- To plan your treatment, we need to do a CT scan of the area with you wearing the mould. We will arrange this scan for the week following your mould fitting. We will give you the date during your visit to the mould room.



- If you have any queries at all about your mould room preparation, please call **0161 446 3525**.

What are the benefits of skin brachytherapy?

Brachytherapy treatment delivers radiotherapy accurately to the tumour and to a small area of normal tissue around the tumour. This very accurate and localised treatment means that we only treat the area that we need to which reduces side effects and gives a good long-term cosmetic effect. The size and shape depends on the area of your body being treated and your doctor will discuss this with you in detail.



Skin brachytherapy to the hand

What are the side effects of skin brachytherapy?

- You should not have many side effects during treatment, but a few days into and after treatment the skin will become red and sore. There may be scabbing, a little bleeding and discharge from the treated area. The area may take 6-8 weeks or more to heal.
- Occasionally as with any area of broken skin, you may get an infection. If this happens, there will be a green or yellow discharge from the treated area that may have an unpleasant smell. Contact your GP who will advise regarding antibiotics.
- The treatment site should not be painful, but if you have any concerns please contact us on **0161 446 3521** or **0161 446 3983**.

A small number of people may need further treatment if the tumour comes back.

Possible late effects

There are some possible late side effects which your doctor will discuss with you. They depend on the area being treated. These can occur months or even years after treatment.

- The treated area will be paler than the surrounding skin.
- Small veins may appear in the treated area.
- You may lose your hair permanently in the treated area.
- On rare occasions an ulcer may form and will require long-term dressing or a small operation to remove it.

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

Surgery may be an alternative treatment. However, we have discussed treatments with you, and advised you that skin brachytherapy is the best way to treat your tumour. There may also be a better cosmetic and/or functional overall result with this treatment than with surgery. If you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to ask for a further consultation with your doctor before treatment starts.

What would happen if you had no treatment?

You have a malignant skin cancer which may grow and spread, causing unpleasant symptoms if left untreated. If the tumour is not treated now, it will likely grow further and more extensive treatment will be needed to treat it.

Your treatments

- When you arrive, please report to the BMRU (department 16). Please ring the bell on the door and the staff will come and collect you.
- The room where you will have your treatment is also used for other types of treatment which can sometimes over-run; so please be prepared for a delay in the afternoons. We will keep you informed about this.
- We will check with you that you have transport available for the daily treatments.
- We will give you your treatment appointments for the week when you come for your first appointment.

It is very important not to be late as it can affect or cancel the treatment. If you are going to be late, or you are unable to attend, please call 0161 446 3521.

Will the treatment hurt?

No, the treatment is completely painless but your skin may become sore after the treatment.

How long will it take?

The treatment times vary from one patient to the next, but the actual treatment normally only takes a few minutes. The whole session including fitting the mould usually lasts about 15-20 minutes. The staff will tell you about your treatment time on your first visit.

Will someone stay with me during treatment?

No one can stay in the room with you. However, the radiographers who are treating you will be watching on a television outside the room and can hear you on an intercom. If you need them, just raise your hand and they will come to you immediately.

After your last treatment

- The radiographers will explain the sort of skin reaction you may expect to see over the next few weeks. You may not notice any reaction straight away, but the treated area may become red and/or itchy by the end of your treatment.
- If necessary, you can take mild painkillers such as paracetamol.
- Do not use tight bandaging as it is important to allow air to the treated area. If you have any discharge from the treated area and you want to protect your clothes, your district nurse will put on a suitable dressing.

Ask the nursing or radiotherapy staff for a copy of The Christie leaflet 'Skin care during and after your radiotherapy treatment' and The Christie booklet 'Radiotherapy to the skin' which contain information about coping with problems such as skin changes.

At home

- If needed, a district nurse will visit you during the first 2-3 days and then on a regular basis to apply any dressings that you may need.
- We will send you an outpatient appointment for your next visit to see a doctor. This will be approximately 8 weeks after your last treatment, by which time any reaction should have settled down. If you have not received your follow up appointment 3-4 weeks after completion of brachytherapy, please call **0161 446 3361**.

Useful contact information

- For queries regarding your treatment, please call the brachytherapy department on **0161 446 3983**.
- Cancer information centre at The Christie – **0161 446 8100**
- Macmillan Cancer Support – **0808 808 00 00** or www.macmillan.org.uk
- Useful websites: www.skincancer.org/
www.skincarephysicians.com/
www.bad.org.uk/public/leaflets/
www.nice.org.uk

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week