



The Shrewsbury and
Telford Hospital
NHS Trust

Patient Information

Breast Radiotherapy Completion

This is a guide to inform you about the side effects that you may experience now you have completed a course of radiotherapy and how they should be managed.

If you have any further questions please contact the **Radiotherapy Department at The Lingen Davies Centre** on **01743 261179**.

Please leave a message on the answerphone with your hospital number and a contact telephone number

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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Skin reactions

You need to continue moisturising your skin even though your radiotherapy has finished, this is because the effects of the radiotherapy will continue for a few weeks.

Your skin colour will continue to deepen for about 10 days after your last radiotherapy treatment. Your skin may become a dark red, it may become spotty and itchy and it may scab and peel. Where there is friction with clothes or under the breast, the skin may break. These reactions are quite normal. The skin reaction will reach a peak at about 10 days following the last radiotherapy session and then gradually settle over the following month. Should the skin break, then you should visit your GP for advice to ensure there is no infection and to obtain alternative creams. Flamazine cream can sometimes help the skin to heal. After 4 weeks your reaction should have settled. The area that has been treated will always be a little drier than the rest of your skin, so you will need to continue to use a moisturiser.

Avoiding the sun

The area treated with radiotherapy will be very sensitive to sun and cold winds. Keep the area out of the sun for 4 weeks following radiotherapy. Once the reaction has settled it is advisable to use a sun block on the treated area if exposed to the sun (e.g. holidays, gardening, or sitting in the sun). Wear clothes made of cotton or natural fibres, which have a closer weave and offer more protection against the sun. It's important to remember that you can burn even through clothing if you are out in hot sun for a long time. You may swim provided your skin is not broken. If you are swimming outdoors don't stay in the water too long, and remember to use a waterproof sun-cream.

Possible long-term side effects

The skin can feel different, drier, or may be darker than before, your breast may feel tender and you may experience pain in your ribs. Red 'spidery' marks (telangectasia) may appear on the skin because small blood vessels have been damaged by the radiotherapy (these are not harmful).

Swelling may occur in a limb or on your body (lymphoedema) because lymph nodes have been damaged. If this occurs inform your Doctor or Breast Care Nurse.

Tiredness

The feeling of tiredness may last a few days or a few months. Make sure that you get enough rest and eat a balanced diet.

Follow-up appointments

After your treatment has finished you will have regular follow-up appointment so that the Oncologist can check your progress. This will involve a clinical examination. Routine mammograms are arranged by the Surgical Team. Follow-ups may be at the Lingen Davies Centre at Shrewsbury, or at Princess Royal Hospital in Telford. The frequency of these appointments will vary but these appointments will become less frequent as time passes. Follow-up appointments are a good opportunity to discuss any problems or worries you may have. It may help to make a list beforehand so that you don't forget anything important. If you have any problems, or notice any new symptoms in between these times, let your GP or Breast Care Nurse know as soon as possible. If required, your appointment to see your Surgeon or Oncologist can be brought forward. Your GP will be sent a complete report about your treatment. People sometimes expect to be given an x-ray or a scan at the end of their treatment to see if it has worked. However x-rays and scans are not helpful at this time. Your Oncologist will let you know if they think it would be useful to have a scan.

Emotional effects

This is a time when you may be experiencing all kinds of emotions. It can be hard to cope once treatment is finished as it takes a while to recover from the treatment you have received

The Hamar Help and Support Centre offer support for you and your family or carers. The staff at the Centre provides information, help and specific counselling to suit your individual needs. Please feel free to discuss any concerns with your Oncologist or Treatment Radiographers. They can also provide you with further information about local and national support groups.

Further Information

Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS) PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns; they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service. Royal Shrewsbury Hospital Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691 Princess Royal Hospital 01952 282888

HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Ward 23, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital 01743 261423

Radiotherapy Treatment 01743 261179

Hamar Help and Support Centre 01743 261035

Macmillan Information & Support Service 01743 261000 ext 1957



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