

Introduction: questions for your treatment team

Many people want to prepare for treatment. Questions are an important part of that. Knowing what to ask can help you understand what your treatment will involve, which can reduce anxiety. There are many articles that show your anxiety can be reduced when you are fully informed about your treatment^{1,2}.

Other people say they just don't want to know, and that is OK too.

Below are some suggestions for questions you might want to ask at different times. You can download and print these questions out, using the PDF button at the top of this page.

[You can also find answers to some common questions here](#)

Before treatment

How does radiotherapy work?

How does radiotherapy target the cancer?

Why is this radiotherapy the best option for my type of cancer?

What are the benefits of the treatment you are suggesting I have?

What are the success rates for this treatment – nationally and for this hospital?

What are the side effects?

What are the late effects?

Will radiotherapy cure my cancer or relieve the symptoms?

Am I having external or internal radiotherapy and can you please explain why?

What are the risks, if any, of this treatment?

What are the risks if I decide not to have this treatment?

Is there an alternative treatment?

During treatment

How long will each individual treatment take?

How many treatments will I need per week and for how many weeks?

How many treatments will I need in total?

What will the treatment be like and how long will it take?

Can you explain exactly what will happen before, during and after treatment?

Is the treatment area going to be marked on my skin?

Is there an option for me to have mark free treatment?

What considerations are being made for my culture and religion?

Can I visit my radiotherapy department before I start my treatment or is there a video I can see about my department?

What can I do to prepare my body for radiotherapy?

How can my family and friends prepare for me having treatment?

If I feel too unwell to attend my treatment what do I do?

If I get side effects from my treatment, who do I contact?

Can I miss treatment to go to a funeral or another such event?

How will you help me if I feel claustrophobic when getting pre-treatment or treatment scans: or treatment on a Linear Accelerator or LINAC?

After treatment

How will I feel straight after treatment?

What are the side effects of the radiotherapy treatment I am having?

Is there anything I can do to prevent or manage side effects?

How will I know if my treatment has worked?

How often will I get check-ups? Who will tell me when they are?

Can I contact the radiotherapy team after treatment?

Practical questions

What kind of clothes should I wear?

Can I bring a family member or friend to my appointments?

Will I need to stay in the hospital?

How will treatment affect my life? For example, with regular activities, driving, relationships, holidays, sex, exercise, and diet?

How do I protect myself from the sun?

When will I need follow-up appointments and for how long?

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns, during my treatment or once my treatment has finished?

References:

1. Douma KF, Koning CC, Zandbelt LC, de Haes HC, Smets EM. Do patients' information needs decrease over the course of radiotherapy? Support Care Cancer. 2012 Sep;20(9):2167-76. doi: 10.1007/s00520-011-1328-0. Epub 2011 Nov 13. PMID: 22081119; PMCID: PMC3411284.
2. [The vital importance of patient information \(bma.org.uk\)](http://bma.org.uk)