This is a plain text version of the website text that goes with our video where a Therapeutic Radiographer answers some common patient questions. Below you will also find a transcript of the video itself.

Therapeutic Radiographer Liz tackles common questions about external beam radiotherapy (EBRT).

What will happen before treatment? During? What support can you get? Find the answers and more in the video below.

About Therapeutic Radiographers

Therapeutic radiographers are the only healthcare professionals specifically trained to scan, plan and deliver your radiotherapy treatments. They also provide supportive care for people having radiotherapy.

They have in-depth training in radiotherapy treatment and its effect on your body. With your clinical oncologists, dosimetrists and medical physics team they deliver your personalised radiotherapy treatment plan. Therapeutic radiographers operate the equipment needed to check, assess and deliver radiotherapy treatment accurately and safely. They carry out safety checks on the equipment each day.

Therapeutic radiographers will see and assess you each day of your treatment. This is to make sure you are well enough to continue. You will often be treated by the same small team throughout. They should welcome any questions or concerns you may have.

Therapeutic radiographers often do further study to specialise in different areas.

They can then become consultant radiographers. They can review patients in clinics, prescribe approved drugs and plan prescribed treatments. Therapeutic radiographers can also be present in primary care settings, like your GP surgery, where they can help you with longer term and late side effects as a result of cancer treatment. They also work in research and clinical trials, developing treatments of the future.

When you have treatment, you may be asked if student therapeutic radiographers can watch and assist. This is an important part of their training and they will be fully supervised.

Further information

Learn more information about side effects here

https://radiotherapy.org.uk/patients-families/side-effects/

Learn more information about late effects here

https://radiotherapy.org.uk/patients-families/late-effects/

Video transcript:

Liz is a therapeutic radiographer.

In this video, she answers some of your questions about external beam radiotherapy, known as EBRT.

Your treatment is tailor made for you, so it varies from individual to individual and you might come across other patients in the waiting room who are having something slightly different to you and that's OK.

Usually you'll come for treatment on a daily basis, Monday to Friday.

You might come only once or twice, or you might come for anything up to about six weeks worth of treatment.

I'm mainly talking about external beam radiotherapy treatment that you may be having internal radiotherapy treatment as well, or in addition to this.

What do I need to do before I have radiotherapy?

So your first appointment with us is usually a planning appointment.

Sometimes it's called ACT scan or a pretreatment appointment.

So you'll come to the department, you might have to follow some instructions beforehand and it might be something like you need to have a full bladder for your treatment.

So it's really important that you do that.

When you come for your scan, we'll get you into the position that we want to do your treatment in and we'll use bits of bits and pieces.

It's called immobilisation equipment.

That's to help you stay still and to be comfortable while you have your treatments.

You might need to have an injection of contrast before you have your CT scan.

This is to help the doctors and the treatment planners to be able to see clearly where they want to treat you.

You may also need to have a mask made for your treatment, particularly if we're treating your head or your neck region.

This might be made in the CT scanner room or in the mould room.

Finally, we may give you some permanent marks on your skin.

These are little made with little pin scratches and they'll be used on a daily basis by the radiographers when they set you up for your treatment.

You might feel anxious about coming for your pretreatment or your CT scan appointments, and that's perfectly natural because it's not something you'll ever have done before.

So one of the radiographers will sit down with you beforehand and explain what's going to happen and we'll answer any questions that you might have.

What happens after my planning appointment?

So once you've had your CT scan, you might find that you have a couple of weeks wait before you actually come back and start your radiotherapy treatment.

And this is to allow us enough time to carry out the planning process.  
  
So the doctors, the dosimetrists and the physicists will all be involved with this along with the radiographers to make sure that everything is planned and safe and ready for you to start your treatment.

What will happen during my treatment when I take you into the room to do your treatment?

They'll get you into the same position as you were in when you came for your planning scan and make sure that you're comfortable and able to stay still.

There's usually 2 radiographers doing your treatment each day, and they may have some student radiographers with them as well who are learning how to set patients up for their treatment.

So most of the time the radiographers will be in the room with you and positioning you using the marks that they've put on your skin during your CT scan appointment or fitting your mask.

Once they're happy that everything is set up correctly, they will go outside of the room to start your treatments, but they'll be able to see and hear you all of the time, so don't worry.

They'll be keeping a close eye on you and if you need them at all, you can either shout out or raise a hand and they'll be straight in to make sure that you're OK.

Whilst they're outside of the room, they'll be taking some images to make sure that you're in the correct position and once they're happy with those, they'll start the treatment.

When the treatment actually starts, it typically takes a few minutes to deliver the treatment.

You won't see or feel anything at all and the machine will be moving around you, but nothings will touch you.

How will you help me when I come for treatment or after treatment?

So there's lots of ways in which the radiographers will help you both during and after your treatments.

So on a daily basis, the radiographers will always ask you how you are and we want you to tell us about any side effects that you're experiencing and about anything at all that's concerning you.

Once your treatment has finished, we normally don't see you again in the radiotherapy department.

You'll usually go back to your clinical oncologist and your clinical nurse specialist team and be followed up with them.

However, we're always happy to receive phone calls or for patients to pop in and see us afterwards.

How will I feel during and after my treatment?

So you may experience some side effects whilst you're having your treatments and these usually relate to the area that you're having treated.

Although sometimes people can get tired when they're having radiotherapy treatment as well, regardless of where they're being treated.

And this is sometimes just to do with the fact that you're coming into the department every day, and that's something that you don't usually do.

How do you work with the rest of my team?

So we work really closely with your consultants and with our dosimetrists and our physicists to plan your treatments.

And also during your treatment, we'll be in regular contact with the consultants and radiotherapy nurses and clinical nurse specialists to update them on how you're doing.

And we'll escalate any kind of issues with side effects or any concerns that you might have to those people as well.

We've also quite heavily involved with review specialist radiographers and with nurses that will be looking after you during the course of your treatments, and we're also often quite able to refer patients for complementary therapies as well, depending on what's available in your area.

What questions should I ask you?

We're always happy to answer lots of questions about side effects and about what happens before and after treatments.

Of course, you can always ask us anything at all.

So practical side of things. For example, where can I park when I come for my treatment, what happens if my train's delayed and where can I go and find a cup of coffee?

Thank you for watching, we wish you the best with your treatment.