

Bladder Cancer: Radiation therapy treatment

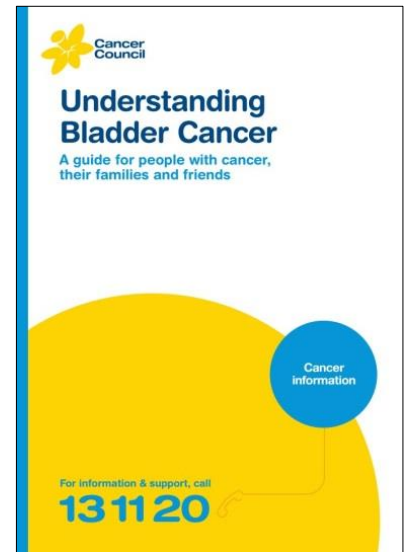
**Information for patients,
families and friends**

About this booklet

This booklet is designed to give you information about radiation therapy treatment for bladder cancer and what to expect.

If you have any questions, please speak to your Radiation Oncologist or the other helpful staff at Alfred Health Radiation Oncology during your next visit.

The Cancer Council of Victoria produces an easy to read bladder cancer information booklet. Copies of the booklet can be found at Alfred Health Radiation Oncology or go to their website www.cancervic.org.au.



Why radiation therapy for bladder cancer?

The purpose of radiation therapy is to destroy cancerous cells in the bladder. Radiation therapy can be used when patients are too unwell or unfit to withstand a large operation. In these cases a shorter course of treatment can be given to improve comfort, ease symptoms and improve quality of life.

Radiation therapy is often given as part of a combination of treatments. Common combinations include chemotherapy and radiation therapy or radiation therapy and surgery. Different combinations are used in different situations. Your radiation oncologist will discuss these options with you.

Side effects

Below is a list of the most common side effects associated with radiation therapy to the bladder. Side effects may not be limited to the following, so if you have any concerns please speak to your radiation oncologist.

Side effects can be divided into two groups:

- Acute – Those which happen during treatment.
- Late – Those which happen after treatment is completed.

Acute side effects

Tiredness

Most people experience tiredness during radiation therapy treatment. This is usually mild and begins 2-3 weeks after treatment starts and continues 2-6 weeks after treatment is finished. If you are having chemotherapy it is likely you will experience more tiredness, which will last longer after your treatment is finished.

Tiredness is not normally debilitating and in itself should not affect your daily activities or the ability to drive. However, you may wish to go to bed earlier or take a rest in the afternoon. We strongly encourage you to continue your regular activities like walking or light exercises.

Nausea

Nausea is uncommon but possible. If you are experiencing nausea, please discuss this with your radiation oncologist or nurse.

Urinary

Passing urine may be uncomfortable 2-3 weeks after treatment starts. The urine flow may be slower than normal and you may need to pass urine more frequently.

Bowel

Some people experience irritation of the bowel, including the need to pass bowel motions more frequently and urgently, wind, discomfort and bleeding. If you are experiencing significant bowel problems, please discuss this with your radiation oncologist or nurse.

Late side effects

Urinary

Symptoms include:

- Shrinkage of the bladder which may increase the need to pass urine more often.
- Very occasional strictures (narrowing of the urethra).
- Leaking of urine.
- Blood in the urine.

Bowel

A small number of people notice a permanent change in their bowel habits including:

- Urgency - sudden sensation of needing to use bowels.
- Frequency – Needing to use the bowels more than once per day.
- Bleeding with motion – 2-3% may require further treatment.

Fertility

It is unlikely that radiation therapy treatment for bladder cancer will affect your fertility. If you have any concerns please discuss this with your radiation oncologist prior to the start of your treatment. We may recommend a referral to a fertility specialist.

Sexual Function

Erections may be affected. This happens in less than 50% of men who had normal erectile function before starting radiation therapy treatment.

Another Cancer

It is known that radiation exposure may cause another cancer many years after treatment. This risk is very small (about 1 in 1000-10000) and is heavily out-weighed by the potential benefit of treatment. If you have any questions or concerns about this please speak to your Radiation Oncologist.

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Information for patients, families and friends

Your Care

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alfredhealth.org.au

Further information:

The Alfred

alfredhealth.org.au

Alfred Health Radiation Oncology

alfredhealth.ro

Latrobe Regional Hospital

lrh.com.au

Cancer Council Victoria

cancervic.org.au

If you would like to provide feedback or request a copy of this information in a different format, contact us at patient.information@alfred.org.au



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