

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy For Bladder Cancer

Radiotherapy is a key treatment option for bladder cancer, particularly for patients who may not be suitable candidates for surgery or who prefer a non-surgical approach. At Birmingham Urology Centre, we provide state-of-the-art radiotherapy treatments that are tailored to your specific needs, ensuring that you receive the most effective and compassionate care possible.

What Is Radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy uses high-energy radiation to target and destroy cancer cells in the bladder. The goal is to eliminate or shrink the tumour while minimising damage to surrounding healthy tissues. Radiotherapy can be used as a primary treatment for bladder cancer, often in combination with other therapies such as chemotherapy, or as an adjunct to surgery.

When Is Radiotherapy Used For Bladder Cancer?

Radiotherapy can be used at various stages of bladder cancer and for different purposes:

- **Primary treatment:** For patients with muscle-invasive bladder cancer, radiotherapy may be used as the main treatment, particularly if surgery is not an option or if the patient prefers to avoid surgery. It may be combined with chemotherapy (chemoradiation) to enhance its effectiveness.
- **Post-surgery (adjuvant therapy):** After surgery, radiotherapy can be used to target any remaining cancer cells, reducing the risk of recurrence.
- **Palliative care:** In advanced cases where bladder cancer has spread to other parts of the body, radiotherapy can help alleviate symptoms such as pain or bleeding, improving the quality of life.

Types Of Radiotherapy For Bladder Cancer

There are different types of radiotherapy available for treating bladder cancer:

- **External beam radiotherapy (EBRT):** This is the most common type of radiotherapy for bladder cancer. It involves directing high-energy beams from a machine outside the body towards the bladder tumour. The treatment is typically given over several weeks, with sessions scheduled five days a week.
- **Internal radiotherapy (brachytherapy):** In some cases, a form of internal radiotherapy called brachytherapy may be used. This involves placing radioactive material inside or very close to the bladder tumour. Brachytherapy is less commonly used for bladder cancer compared to EBRT.

What To Expect During Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy is usually administered as an outpatient treatment, meaning you can go home after each session. Here's what you can expect:

- **Treatment planning:** Before starting radiotherapy, you will undergo a planning session, which may include a CT scan to map out the exact location of the tumour. This ensures that the radiation is precisely targeted.
- **Treatment sessions:** Each radiotherapy session typically lasts about 10-30 minutes. You will lie on a treatment table, and the radiotherapy machine will be positioned around you to deliver the radiation. The procedure is painless, but you will need to stay still during the treatment.
- **Course of treatment:** Radiotherapy for bladder cancer is usually delivered over several weeks. The exact duration and number of sessions will depend on your individual treatment plan.

Benefits And Risks Of Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy offers several benefits as a treatment for bladder cancer:

- **Non-surgical option:** Radiotherapy is a valuable alternative for patients who cannot undergo surgery due to health reasons or who wish to avoid the risks associated with surgery.
- **Organ preservation:** Unlike surgery, which may involve removing part or all of the bladder, radiotherapy aims to treat the cancer while preserving the bladder.
- **Combination therapy:** Radiotherapy can be combined with chemotherapy (chemoradiation) to improve treatment outcomes.

However, there are also risks associated with radiotherapy, including the potential for side effects and the possibility that the cancer may not respond fully to treatment. We will discuss these risks with you and help you weigh the benefits against the potential drawbacks.

Side Effects Of Radiotherapy

While radiotherapy is effective in treating bladder cancer, it can cause side effects due to the radiation affecting nearby healthy tissues. Common side effects include:

- **Fatigue:** Feeling tired is a common side effect of radiotherapy, which can last for several weeks after treatment ends.
- **Skin irritation:** The skin in the treatment area may become red, sore, or itchy. This is usually temporary and can be managed with skincare advice from your healthcare team.
- **Bladder irritation:** You may experience symptoms similar to a urinary tract infection (UTI), such as frequent urination, urgency, or discomfort when passing urine.
- **Bowel issues:** Some patients may experience bowel changes, such as diarrhoea or cramps, due to the proximity of the bladder to the intestines.
- **Sexual health:** Radiotherapy can affect sexual function, including changes in libido or discomfort during sexual activity.

Your team at Birmingham Urology Centre will monitor your side effects closely and provide supportive care to

manage any discomfort.

Why Choose Birmingham Urology Centre

At Birmingham Urology Centre we are committed to providing the highest standard of care for patients undergoing radiotherapy for bladder cancer. Our experienced team of urologists and oncologists use the latest technology and techniques to ensure precise, effective treatment tailored to your individual needs. We are dedicated to supporting you through every step of your treatment journey, from diagnosis to recovery, with a focus on your overall well-being.

Contact us

For more information about radiotherapy for bladder cancer or to schedule a consultation, please contact Birmingham Urology Centre today. Our team is here to provide you with expert care and support throughout your treatment. Reach out to us to take the first step towards effective and compassionate cancer care.