



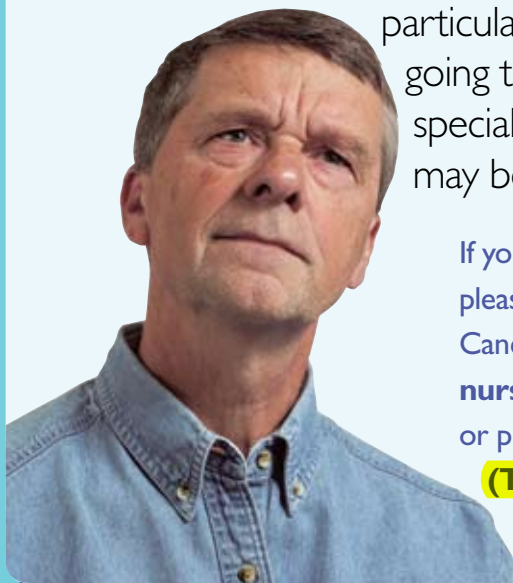
Penile Cancer information sheet

Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy

For further information on life after treatment, please refer to the main booklet.

Orchid is dedicated to supporting men with a diagnosis of penile cancer. This information sheet describes the

particular treatment that you are going to have along with any special care and tips we think may be helpful.



If you would like to know more, please contact the Orchid Male Cancer Information Nurses; email nurse@orchid-cancer.org.uk or phone **0203 465 6105**

(Tuesdays 08.00 - 18.00).



Primary Radiotherapy

(initial treatment for localised penile cancer)



Radiation therapy is the use of high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells. The most common type of radiation treatment is called external-beam radiation therapy which is radiation directed at the cancer from outside the body. External radiotherapy may require up to 25 treatment sessions every day, 5-days a week for a period of around 15 minutes daily. This type of radiotherapy can also be used to treat lymph nodes that have become affected by cancer.

Radiotherapy can be used as an alternative to surgery in certain circumstances to treat penile cancer. If it is not successful then

surgery may be able to be performed at a later date. This is called salvage surgery.

A further type of radiotherapy called brachytherapy can sometimes be used. This technique involves the insertion of tiny radioactive wires into and around the cancer site (usually involving a minor operation). These wires will give off radiation to the surrounding area which will in turn kill the cancer cells. A special mould will need to be created to shield healthy penile tissue from being damaged by any radiation.

Radiotherapy may cause side effects both in the short term and long term. Side effects such as tiredness and sore skin tend to occur in the short term during treatment. Please refer to the following chart for tips on dealing with these types of symptoms.

Side effects related to radiotherapy treatment

Fatigue

This may be caused by a combination of both treatment and travel.

Try

- Getting small restful naps if you cannot sleep to your normal pattern
- Asking your team if you can be prescribed mild sedative medication
- Meditating. Some people find this beneficial

Skin reactions

Radiotherapy can irritate the sensitive skin around your penis. Sometimes the blood supply to the penis may be affected which can cause healthy tissue to be starved of the substances it needs to stay healthy.

Let your specialist know if this happens.

Try

- Allowing 6 weeks after radiotherapy treatment before exposure to the sun **it may be best to cover the treated area for up to a year**

Avoid

- Perfumed soaps and have tepid baths
- Vigorous rubbing of the skin around the treated area

In the longer term radiotherapy can sometimes cause the tissue in your penis to become thicker and produce scarring which can then cause a narrowing or 'stricture' of your urethra. If this does occur a minor operation performed by an urologist may be advised during which your urethra is widened (urethrotomy). Alternatively you may be taught how to dilate your urethra using specially designed instruments or urinary catheters (urethral dilatation). You may need to perform this on a regular basis a few times each week. A specialist nurse will teach you how to perform these procedures if you need to.

If the blood supply to your penis is reduced as a result of radiotherapy or the tissue has become thicker or less healthy you may find it more difficult to obtain an erection. Sometimes this ability will slowly return as your body heals after your treatment, however sometimes it may take longer to recover or be more permanent. In this situation once

your treatment has finished it may be possible for you to try medication such as Viagra to improve things. Your specialist team should be able to give you further advice on these types of treatment once your treatment has finished.

Pelvic Radiotherapy

If penile cancer has spread beyond the penis and a definitive cure is not possible, radiotherapy to specific areas in the pelvic region may be suggested. Radiotherapy in this situation can sometimes reduce the size of cancer that has spread which may be causing pain and discomfort. Modern day radiotherapy is very accurate in targeting specific areas of cancer however occasionally healthy tissue may be affected. This can sometimes cause irritation and inflammation to surrounding tissues and it is important that you discuss your treatment in this situation with your health care team.

Lymphoedema

This is a condition that may occur following radiotherapy to the groin area. Sometimes the radiotherapy may compromise the drainage of the lymph fluid in the pelvic area (see page 13 of the main booklet) and this in turn causes it to accumulate without being able to drain away normally. This may cause your leg to swell and is called lymphoedema. This in turn can cause pain and discomfort. It is important that you take care of the leg on the side of your surgery for the rest of your life to avoid potential problems associated with lymphoedema.

Sometimes lymphoedema may cause the scrotum or penis to swell. If this occurs then the swelling will need to be fully assessed by your health care team. Treatment for this may involve gentle massage of the surrounding lymph nodes in your groin or abdomen to help promote a normal flow of the lymph fluid and supportive surgical dressings. This treatment is provided by a specialist team and treatment may be given over several months. Again it is extremely important to ensure meticulous skin hygiene.

- ▶ Try and avoid scratches or bites on your legs, for instance from insects (use insect repellent) or pets. Try and keep vulnerable areas covered if possible. If you do get a cut or scratch no matter how small, it is advisable to wash it with soap and water and use an antiseptic cream such as Savlon to try and prevent any infection. **If the area becomes red, painful or swollen you will need to see your GP to rule out possible infection and may need to be prescribed antibiotics.**
- ▶ Avoid sunburn to the area. Ensure you use a high factor sun block if you are going to be exposed to strong sunlight. Avoid extremes of temperature to the area.

- ▶ If you need to shave your leg for any reason use an electric razor rather than a wet shave.
- ▶ Avoid inoculations and injections in the affected leg. **This includes complementary treatments such as acupuncture.**
- ▶ To maintain a healthy blood circulation which will help transport lymph fluid normally try and avoid wearing tight garments such as socks or trousers that may restrict blood flow. Try and avoid becoming overweight and standing still or on your feet for excessive periods of time. Try and remember to move your legs every so often and avoid keeping them crossed for long periods of time.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is the use of drugs to kill cancer cells, usually by stopping the cancer cells' ability to grow and divide. Unlike the topical creams mentioned before however this type of chemotherapy is administered into the blood stream and is called systemic chemotherapy. In the UK chemotherapy is used more widely for cancer that has spread to other areas of the body or as part of a clinical trial. Possible chemotherapy drugs that may be used are Cisplatin, Fluorouracil (infusion) and Docetaxel. They will usually be administered in "cycles". Cycles are patterns of administering certain drugs that may be repeated over a period of weeks or months. Several cycles may be recommended.

Like all medical treatments chemotherapy can have side effects. This will differ from individual to individual and not everyone will experience the same symptoms. If you are receiving or going to receive chemotherapy please refer to the following section for tips and advice on how to reduce the effect of potential side effects.

Following radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment further scans will be performed to see how well the treatments have worked and these results will help determine if any other treatment is needed.

Chemotherapy effects

While the chemotherapy drugs are acting on the cancer cells in your body, they may also temporarily reduce the number of normal cells in your blood. When these cells are in short supply, you may be more likely to get an infection and to tire easily. It is important to let your cancer specialist team know straight away

if you feel unwell or develop a temperature at any time during your treatment. During chemotherapy your blood will be tested regularly to make sure your white blood cells, responsible for fighting infection, and your kidneys are functioning correctly. If necessary, you will be given antibiotics to treat any infection.

Before chemotherapy you may need to have **a hearing test (audiogram)** as chemotherapy can affect your hearing as well as **a breathing test** as some chemotherapy can sometimes affect your lungs.

Common side effects of chemotherapy:	
Nausea and vomiting	<div><div>Try</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">•Anti sickness (antiemetic medication) may be given to ease these symptoms. They can usually be given on a regular basis•Ginger beer, tea or biscuits (eat and drink regularly throughout the day)•Peppermint tea, always drink slowly taking lots of sips•A small meal a few hours before your chemo starts</div></div> <div><div>Never have chemotherapy on an empty stomach</div><div><div>Avoid</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">•Hot and spicy foods (curry, Cajun cooking etc.)•Foods with high sugar content•Fatty and greasy foods (chips, burgers etc.)•Large meals•Eating and drinking too fast and drinking with meals•Alcohol•Caffeine which is found in tea/coffee/chocolate including chocolate bars/energy drinks•Baby food this is designed for babies and has very little nutrition for adults!</div></div></div>
Taste (chemotherapy can cause a metallic taste in your mouth)	<div><div>Try</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">•Fresh pineapple or other sharp tasting fruit•Boiled sweets while having treatment•Seasoning or marinating meat for your meals to add flavour•Using herbs and spices in your cooking to add stronger taste</div></div>

Common side effects of chemotherapy:

Mouth sores or ulcers from chemotherapy	<p>Try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh pineapple can help prevent and heal mouth ulcers by stimulating saliva which protects your mouth• Bonjela• Soft child's/baby bristle toothbrush• Baby or soothing (for instance aloe vera toothpaste)• Soft pureed or liquid diet to prevent chewing• Rinsing your mouth with salt water on a regular basis if you can tolerate it up to 4-5 times a day• Sucking crushed ice during treatment• Artificial saliva which can be prescribed by your doctor• Vaseline for your lips <p>Avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tomato and citrus fruit based products and tobacco• Oral care products that may cause a dry mouth and products that contain alcohol or peroxide• Hot and spicy foods (curry, Cajun etc.)• Nuts and seeds
Tiredness	<p>Try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting small restful naps if you cannot sleep to your normal pattern, not too many however as you may not sleep in the night• Meditating. Some people find this beneficial• Sleeping tablets which can be prescribed if insomnia is becoming a big problem
Loss of appetite	<p>Try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small frequent meals throughout the day• Fortified soups/drinks or milk shakes
Diarrhoea	<p>Try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rice, pasta and potatoes with skins• Dry crackers/biscuits• White bread• Bananas (a good source of potassium, essential for your body's metabolism. Excessive diarrhoea will deplete potassium levels) <p>Avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High fibre foods (bran, fruit, nuts etc.)
Hair loss This may occur 2-3 weeks after chemotherapy.	<p>Try</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A baseball cap• Shaving your hair off when it starts to fall out <p>Avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head cooling devices may reduce the circulating blood supply which can reduce the effectiveness of the chemotherapy

The effects of chemotherapy may take some time to subside after treatment. This can take a few months to a year or more. You may feel tired or exhausted. Take this into account when considering going back to work or for a busy lifestyle as you may not be able to work at the same level for a while. Please refer to the main penile cancer booklet for information on financial support etc. It may also take your family and friends time to adjust to long term changes in your health so do not be surprised if they are acting a bit strange or distant.

Clinical trials and current research

Clinical trials involve looking into new or more effective ways of treating penile cancer for any stage of the disease. They will also be used to look at ways of reducing possible side effects of current treatment. You may be asked if you wish to take part in a clinical trial. If you do decide you would like to take part you can still opt out of the trial in the future if you wish. It will not affect your medical care or future treatment. Usually a specialist clinical trials nurse will discuss these treatments with you.

Research into newer treatments for penile cancer that are currently being investigated include:

Targeted therapy.

Targeted therapy is a treatment that targets the cancer's specific genes or substances that make it cancerous and cause it to grow.

Treatment is experimental but involves using chemicals such as chemotherapy to target the specific cancer cells or new chemical substances to alter or kill certain areas of the cancer.

Radiosensitizers

Radiosensitizers are drugs that make tumour cells more sensitive to radiation therapy, making radiation therapy more effective.

Combination therapy.

Researchers are studying whether the combination of chemotherapy and radiation therapy better reduces the risk of recurrence and/or increases survival than standard treatments.

Metastatic penile cancer

Cancer that has spread to other areas or organs in the body is called metastatic disease. Unfortunately although it may be possible to reduce the cancer or regress it to some degree using radiotherapy or chemotherapy, it will usually not be possible to effect a cure. Treatment in this situation may involve a combination of surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. In this situation your care and treatment will be managed by a number of health professionals who will work together to give you the best possible quality of life.

Further information

For further information on the possible effects of chemotherapy or radiotherapy, please go to: **www.macmillan.org.uk**
or telephone **0808 8080000**.

Important contact numbers

Specialist Nurse contact no:

District Nurse contact no:

Always make sure that you have the contact details of your specialist team to hand should you need to contact them prior to your follow up appointments.



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