

Information leaflet for patients
Receiving Radium-223 Treatment



This leaflet is for patients who have prostate cancer that has spread to the bones and are to receive a course of Radium-223 treatment. It describes:

- What this treatment is, how it works and how you will have the treatment.
- The effects you may experience during and after treatment.
- How best to cope with these effects.

What is Radium-223?

Radium-223 is a type of internal radiotherapy. It is a small amount of a radioactive material that is taken up by active bone cells in a similar manner to calcium. The brand name for Radium-223 is Xofigo.

If you have prostate cancer that has spread to your bones causing pain, a course of Radium-223 may help to relieve some of the pain you are experiencing.

What are the benefits of having the treatment?

Radium-223 may improve the control of cancer that has spread to bone, leading to improved pain control and quality of life. However it is your choice if you do not wish to receive this treatment.

How does Radium-223 work?

Cancer cells are more active than bone cells and so are more likely to pick up the Radium-223. Radium-223 uses a type of radiation called alpha particles which only penetrate a short distance into the bone, targeting the cancer cells.

How will I receive Radium-223?

You will have your treatment at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre. A trained member of staff from the nuclear medicine department will insert a small needle (venflon) into a vein in your arm and you will receive your injection of Radium-223. It only takes about a minute to receive a calculated dose of Radium-223. We will

then remove the needle from your arm and you will be allowed to go home again. Radium-223 is usually given as 6 cycles, one every four weeks for a total of five to six months.

Are there any side effects to my treatment?

The effects of treatment vary from one person to another and the information given here is intended as a general guide. It also does not mean you will experience all of the effects described. Your doctor and specialist nurses will explain things further when necessary and will be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

As with all medical procedures, we will ask you to sign a consent form which indicates that you understand the potential effects of treatment and are happy to proceed.

Radium-223 is usually well tolerated but the most common side effects are:

- Diarrhoea.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Fatigue.
- Low platelets (Thrombocytopenia) which can affect your blood clotting.
- Low haemoglobin (Anaemia) which may require a blood transfusion.
- You may also notice increased pain in the 2 to 3 days following your first couple of treatments. This is normal and usually a sign that the Radium-223 is working, however you may need to increase your pain relief during this time.

If you notice any of the following, you should report it to your doctor right away:

- Any unusual bleeding.
- More bleeding than usual after minor injury such as shaving or brushing your teeth.

- Fever and or raised temperature.
- Symptoms of pain, swelling or numbness of the jaw or loosening of the teeth.

Do I need to do any preparation before I come for my injection?

You will need to have an up to date blood test before we give you each injection. Your G.P. can do this for you before you come for your treatment. **However it must be done within 7 days prior to your appointment date.** This saves time at your hospital visit and means medical staff can access the results to ensure you are fit to receive the treatment on the day.

We will weigh you at each visit as the dose of Radium-223 you receive is calculated according to this.

There are no restrictions to eating and drinking on the day of treatment and you will also be able to drive home after your treatment.

If you have any problems with bladder and bowel incontinence (which is when you have lack of control passing urine or bowel motions), you must let your doctor know. It may impact on your treatment and extra precautions may be required to deal with this.

What should I expect whilst I am going through treatment?

Before you have your Radium-223 injection each month, you will be reviewed by the clinical nurse specialist or one of the outpatient nurses who helps with the clinic. Side effects to treatment as well as your current blood tests will be discussed. Blood forms will be given for your next visit.

What precautions should I take following treatment?

The Radium-223 may be present in your urine and bowel motions after treatment. We therefore suggest you follow some precautions listed below for 7 days after your treatment:

- Try to drink plenty of fluids for a few days.
- If you are out and about, use a normal toilet instead of a urinal if possible.
- You should sit to urinate.
- Put the lid down and flush twice.
- Wipe away any spilled urine and bowel motions with a tissue and flush it away.
- Ensure that you always wash your hands after going to the toilet.
- Wash any clothes separately that have come into contact with your urine and bowel motions right away.
- If you develop diarrhoea, you may be required to take Loperamide. This will be discussed at your first appointment.
- If you cut yourself, wipe away any spilled blood.

If you follow the precautions listed above you will not harm anyone that you routinely come into contact with. The radiation you have received is not transferred by being in close proximity to others, therefore you may go out and about and socialise as normal.

If you are admitted to hospital in between treatments, you should inform staff that you are receiving Radium-223. We will give you a safety card which you can put in a wallet and carry with you at all times.

Contraception

If you are engaged in sexual activity with a person who could become pregnant we advise that you use effective birth control methods during, and up to 6 months after completion of treatment with Radium-223. Your specialist nurse or doctor will be happy to discuss this further with you.

What should I expect once I have completed treatment?

To begin with you may not feel any different, however after a couple of weeks you may start to notice that your pain has lessened. It is hoped that by the time you finish your course of Radium-223 that your pain has improved or is in better control with your current analgesics (pain killers).

An appointment will be made for you to go back to see your consultant in clinic and at that time, further scans may be arranged.

What if I am unable to attend for my treatment?

To receive the most benefit from your treatment, it is important for you to attend all the appointments that you are given. Radium-223 is an expensive treatment and is ordered on an individual patient basis. However, we do understand that there may be a reason that you are unable to attend and with notice, it may be possible to rearrange your appointment.

Please contact Nuclear Medicine on 0141 301 7900 to discuss your appointment if required.

Contact numbers

Nuclear Medicine 0141 301 7900

Gail Buchanan Urology Nurse Specialist – 0141 301 7638 (answering machine) or 0141 301 7000, Page 15073

Cancer Treatment Helpline

For Urgent Calls - This is for patients **on or within 6 weeks of treatment** who have urgent or severe symptoms.

Beatson 8am-8pm Tel: 0141 301 7990

National 8pm-8am Tel: 0800 917 7711

NHS 24 helpline

111 is the new free way to phone the **NHS 24 helpline** from landlines and mobiles.

The helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When to phone

You should only phone the NHS 24 helpline:

- If you or someone you know is unwell.
- When your doctor's surgery is closed and you feel it can't wait until it re-opens.

Where can I Get Help?

Information and Support

All our staff want to make sure your treatment goes as smoothly as possible and will try to help with any questions or problems you may have. Further specialist help and information is also available.

- **The Macmillan Information & Support Centre** is on Level 1 at the main entrance of the Beatson. They offer emotional support, information and signposting to services within and near to the Beatson and in your own local area. Open Monday to Friday 8.15am to 4.15pm. Please visit or phone on **0141 301 7390**.

- **Benefits and financial information**

You may be entitled to benefits while you are recovering and unable to work. You can find out benefit advice from:

Beatson Macmillan Benefits office – 0141 301 7374

Glasgow Macmillan Benefits team – 0141 420 8045

Dumbarton Macmillan Benefits team – 01389 737 050

Counselling and Clinical Psychology

This leaflet deals with the physical aspects of your treatment, but your emotional well being is just as important to us. Being diagnosed with cancer can be a deeply distressing time for you and those closest to you. Within the department we have a counselling and clinical psychology service that can help with worries and difficulties you might be having. If you think this may be helpful to you, please ask staff to put you in touch.

Support Organisations

- **Maggie's Centre Gartnavel:** 0141 357 2269
- **Maggie's Lanarkshire, Monklands Hospital:** 01236 771 199
- **Maggie's Forth Valley:** 01324 868 069

Maggie's Centre provides a comprehensive cancer support programme for people and their families affected by cancer. Counselling service available.

- **Cancer Support Scotland, The Calman Centre, Gartnavel campus.** Freephone 0800 652 4531 or 0141 337 8199
Provides emotional and practical support on a one-to-one basis and through community based groups. Complementary therapies available.
- **Prostate Cancer UK:** Helpline: 0800 074 8383. There are support groups throughout the country. Please check the website to find your local group.
www.prostatecanceruk.org
- **Macmillan Cancer Support:** 0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk
Provides practical, medical, emotional and financial advice for those affected by cancer.