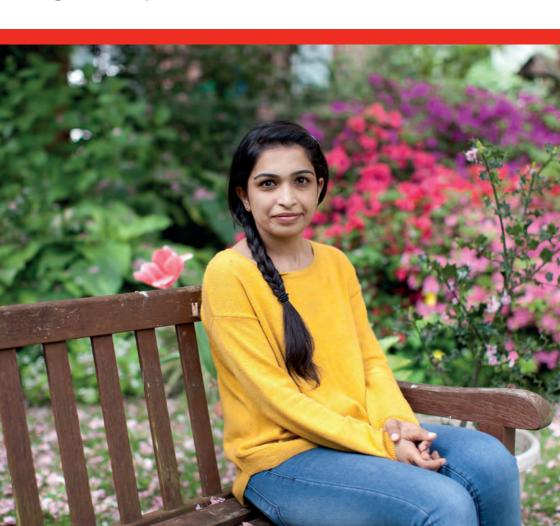




Radiotherapy
A guide for patients and their carers



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Christie website

For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit **www.christie.nhs.uk** or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

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Introduction

This booklet is to tell you about external beam radiotherapy. The Christie is a specialised centre for radiotherapy, and patients come for treatments that are not available at general hospitals. This is a general introduction to radiotherapy. If you would like more detailed information about your own treatment, please ask the staff. You may have heard about radiotherapy from people you know or from patients. Remember that their information may not apply to you.

Radiotherapy at The Christie (department 39)

Tel: 0161 446 3485

Radiotherapy at Salford

Tel: 0161 918 7800

Radiotherapy at Oldham

Tel: 0161 918 7700

The proton beam therapy centre, main reception

Tel: 0161 918 7577

What is radiotherapy?

Radiotherapy uses exact, carefully measured doses of radiation to treat diseases. It is often given in small doses over a specified period of days or weeks, but may be given in a single treatment.

External beam radiotherapy can be delivered in many different ways using high energy radiation beams. These can either be photons, electrons or protons. Photons and electrons are delivered from a machine called a linear accelerator whilst protons are delivered from a machine called a cyclotron.

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust now provides a proton beam therapy service. However, it is not appropriate to treat all kinds of cancers with proton beam therapy. This will be decided by your oncologist and discussed with you.

If it is appropriate to treat you with protons, there may be occasions when part of your treatment is given with photons. This will be discussed during the consent process.

Treatment is given by a team of therapeutic radiographers who operate the treatment machines which direct high energy rays to the precise area needing treatment. Therapeutic radiographers are specially trained health care professionals involved in radiotherapy planning, treatment and care.

Radiotherapy should not be confused with chemotherapy, which uses drugs to treat cancer. In some situations, your doctor will recommend both radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

How does radiotherapy work?

Our bodies are made up of cells and all cells are able to divide. If radiation hits a cell that is dividing, the cell will be damaged. Cancer cells are much less able than normal cells to repair the damage, so more of the cancer cells will be destroyed.

When will radiotherapy begin?

The specialist doctor who is in charge of your treatment is a clinical oncologist. A team of doctors, radiographers and and nurses will care for you and a named consultant will be responsible for your treatment.

In choosing your treatment, your clinical oncologist at The Christie has carefully considered the nature of your illness and your particular needs with regard to your treatment plan.

When you attend for your initial radiotherapy planning appointment the radiographers will be able to tell you exactly when you will start your treatment. As everybody's treatment varies the amount of time needed to plan the treatment varies. You may have between 1 and more than 30 treatments.

Agreeing to treatment

Consent to treatment

The doctors, nurses and radiographers will give you some written information to support what they have said about your treatment. At the time your treatment is being planned, you will have the opportunity to discuss anything that you do not understand, or any anxieties you may have.

We will ask you to sign a consent form agreeing to accept the treatment that you are being offered. The basis of the agreement is that you have had The Christie's written description of the proposed treatment and that you have been given an opportunity to discuss any concerns. You are entitled to request a second opinion from another doctor who specialises in treating this cancer. You can ask your own consultant or your GP to refer you. Your consent may be withdrawn at any time before or during this treatment. Should you decide to withdraw your consent then a member of your treating team will discuss the possible consequences with you.

Radiation can be harmful to an unborn child. During radiotherapy it is important that you do not become pregnant and therefore we recommend that contraception is used. For patients having chemotherapy we recommend barrier contraception is used. It is important to let the radiographers know if you have missed a period, or suspect that you might be pregnant before you have any scans or treatment.

What are the benefits of this treatment?

Radiotherapy works by damaging cancer cells while causing as little damage as possible to normal cells. The benefits of treatment vary from one person to another depending on the sort of illness. The aims of treatment may include an attempt to:

- cure the cancer
- or reduce the chances of the cancer coming back, such as after surgery
- or shrink the tumour so that surgery is easier to perform
- or shrink the tumour which may slow down its progress and give relief from troublesome symptoms

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

There may be other treatment options available but the doctor at your local hospital will have advised you about the possible options for you before referring you to The Christie. Your Christie consultant will be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may still have.

What will happen if I do not have this treatment?

There is a risk that your cancer may continue to grow and your symptoms may get worse. You can discuss what to do next with your doctor.

Treatment preparation

To help with the planning of your treatment, you will have a CT and/or MRI scan. The scans which are undertaken to plan your radiotherapy are solely aimed to give enough information to plan the radiotherapy accurately.

There are cubicles for changing and also loose gowns to wear, if necessary. Alternatively, we may adjust your clothes in order to expose the area to be scanned and treated. The radiographers will assist you on to the bed and adjust both the bed and your position so that you are in the correct position for the scan. They will try to make you as comfortable as possible as you will be asked to keep still for the duration of the scan.

These scans are not diagnostic and therefore do not give sufficient information to assess the status of your cancer or any other abnormalities. The planning is very important and as a result can take up to a few weeks to complete. During this planning session the radiographers will draw some marks on the area being treated with a skin pen. These marks do wash off and so some permanent marks, like tiny black freckles, will need to be made. These will help the radiographers set you up in the correct position for treatment every day.

Cast/mask making

For some patients it is necessary to make a plastic mould to fit the treated area such as the head, neck or limb. The mask or cast helps us to ensure that the treatment is delivered accurately each day. This takes place in the mould room or in the CT scanning room itself.

Treatment marks are put on the mask or cast, so it is not normally necessary to put marks on your skin. The type of mask or cast varies depending on the area of the body you are having treated. The radiographers will decide what is most suitable for you.

What happens during treatment?

On the day of your first treatment, you will come to the radiotherapy department. If you are an inpatient, a porter or clinical support worker may collect you from your ward and



escort you to the department. On the treatment unit you will meet a clinical support worker. They help patients plan their appointments for the treatment.

The radiographers will have the details of your treatment which the doctor has carefully planned. They will discuss the treatment

with you and how to minimise any side effects. They will also check whether you are still happy to go ahead with your treatment. This is the ideal opportunity to ask any questions you may still have.

The radiographers will take you into the treatment room and ask you to remove or loosen any clothing that covers the area being treated. They will help you onto the treatment bed and adjust your position as they did for your scan. They will make you as comfortable as possible and you will be asked to keep still for the duration of the treatment.

The radiotherapy machines are quite large and you may find them a little frightening to begin with, but there is no need to worry, the treatment is painless. Each session may take between 10 and 30 minutes, dependent on the area being treated, but the actual treatment only lasts a few minutes. The radiographers operate the machines from outside the room so when all the adjustments have been made and you are in exactly the right position, the radiographers will make sure you are alright and then leave the room and switch the machine on. There is nothing to feel and nothing to see. The machines make a buzzing noise when they are giving treatment.

During your treatment the radiographers will need to take images of the area you are having treated. This will be done at the same time as your treatment; you probably won't even notice the images have been taken. These images are purely to check that you are in the correct position and not to check how the tumour is responding to treatment.

Please do not feel abandoned; cameras inside the room give the radiographers at the control desk a clear view of you. They will be watching you all the time. If you feel you need to cough or sneeze the radiographers will tell you beforehand how to let them know this. They will switch off the machine and come in immediately.

Once your treatment has finished they will help you off the bed and arrange your next visit. You are then able to return home or to your ward.

It is very important that you do not miss treatment days as this may make your treatment less effective. If you feel you are unable to attend for any reason please telephone the staff on your treatment machine and discuss the problem with a radiographer. Call the radiotherapy department on **0161 446 3485**.

Treatment is given Monday to Friday, including bank holidays. There is usually no radiotherapy given on Saturdays and Sundays and this is taken into account when your treatment is planned. Treatment days will be changed and may include Saturdays and/or Sundays around the Christmas and New Year period.

You will usually be treated on the same machine throughout the course of your treatment. However the machines have to be serviced frequently and as a result you may be treated on a different machine. Do not worry, the treatment is exactly the same.

If you feel particularly anxious or you are having difficulties with having radiotherapy, please speak to the radiographers. There may be things that they can suggest that might help

such as referring you for support to the CALMS team who provide complementary therapies.

Appointments

Once you are having treatment, if you have any problems with your appointment time, please contact the radiotherapy department where you are having treatment: The Christie at Withington on **0161 446 3485**, The Christie at Salford on **0161 918 7800** or The Christie at Oldham on **0161 918 7700** as soon as possible. It is helpful if you can quote your hospital number – it will be on your appointment card or letter. Proton beam therapy patients should contact the scheduling team on **0161 918 7170**.

If you change your address, please let the health records department staff know your new address and the address of your new GP.

Some questions about treatments

Will it hurt?

No. You will feel no pain at all while you are actually having your treatment.

Will I lose my hair?

Not unless your head is being treated. Wigs are available through The Christie, if needed. You may lose body hair in the area being treated and this hair loss can sometimes begin during and after treatment. But it usually starts to grow back some time after treatment is finished.

Is it safe?

Radiation used in medical treatment is given in controlled, carefully measured doses. The aim is to include all tissues that could possibly contain cancer cells whilst minimising the dose to the normal tissue.

Will I be radioactive?

No. Patients treated by X-rays do not become radioactive. The radiation does not stay in your body after treatment, so you cannot do anyone else any harm. It is safe for you to mix with other people including children and pregnant women and to have visitors if you are on the ward.

I already have problems with my health. Will radiotherapy make them worse?

Not usually. The treatment may make you feel more tired than normal. Please tell your treatment team about any existing medical conditions and continue with any medication that you may be taking unless your doctor or nurse tell you otherwise. Ask your Christie doctor if you are worried about any other health problems.

Can I come for treatment at any time of the day?

If you are having treatment as an outpatient, the radiographers will give you an appointment time for the first treatment when you attend for your planning session. After that you can arrange a time that suits both you and the machine with your treating team. Please try and be as flexible as possible and give priority to your treatment sessions over general appointments. The time you prefer may not be available at the start of your treatment because of the large patient numbers on the treatment unit.

If you need a specific time, please give the treating team as much notice as possible, although the department cannot guarantee to meet all requests. The time we give you may vary half an hour either way on the day due to emergencies. Please check your appointment time for the following day before you leave, in case of any changes.

Appointments will be made for you to meet your consultant or one of the review team to check that you are coping with the side effects of treatment. We will give you a morning or afternoon appointment to fit in with your consultant's clinic.

If you are an inpatient, the treatment team will speak to the ward to organise when you will be brought for treatment and will ensure your treatment does not interfere with other tests or assessments on the ward. Please let the ward nurses know if you have any questions. If you are going home for the weekend, please let the staff know and they will do their best to treat you before lunch.

Will I be treated as an outpatient or an inpatient?

You will usually have your treatment as an outpatient. Some people continue to work during part of their treatment. However, after daily travel and treatment, you may feel tired and need to rest.

Your doctor will have discussed with you about travelling daily for your treatment as an outpatient. However, if you do become unwell during your treatment you may need to be admitted as an inpatient to support you through your radiotherapy. You will not have to stay in bed, so bring suitable day wear such as tops and skirts or trousers. Treatment usually takes up only a small part of the day and, if you are well enough, you may be able to go out – check with the ward staff first. Inpatients should be able to go home as soon as their course of treatment is finished, or very shortly afterwards.

What happens if I need ambulance transport to and from the hospital?

Many patients are able to bring themselves or can ask a friend or relative to help them out. If you think you may need ambulance transport, please discuss this with a clinical support worker or radiographer on your first visit to the radiotherapy department. Ambulance transport can be arranged subject to eligibility criteria based on medical need. There also needs to be a medical need for you to bring an escort on hospital transport.

There can be delays for some time either side of your appointment because of the high demand for transport. Those travelling by hospital transport will have to be ready at least 2 hours before their appointment time and may not be collected for up to 2 hours after their appointment has finished. Please take this into account when you are deciding whether to use ambulance transport or not.

Hospital transport is provided by several different ambulance services. Contact the transport liaison office at The Christie directly on **0161 446 8114** or **8143** for advice and bookings (Monday to Friday, 8.00am–6.00pm). Patients attending The Christie at Salford can contact **0161 918 7800** and patients attending The Christie at Oldham can contact **0161 918 7700** for advice about transport.

For proton beam therapy patients staying in accommodation in Manchester, there is a shuttle bus service. Please ask your key worker for further information.

Side effects from treatment

Side effects from radiotherapy vary. Any side effects you get will depend on which part of your body is treated, and on the number of treatments you have. Even people who have had very similar treatments can have different side effects.

Most people notice the side effects 1–2 weeks after starting their course of radiotherapy. These may well continue after you have finished your treatment, but they should gradually fade by 4 to 6 weeks after treatment. During your course of radiotherapy, one of the doctors or radiographers on the team looking after you will see you regularly.

Skin reaction

The extent of a skin reaction in the treatment area will vary for each person depending on the area being treated and the type of treatment you have. You may notice that your skin in the area being treated becomes more sensitive and can become slightly pink, feel tighter than usual and warm to the touch. Ask the radiographers for advice regarding skin care during your treatment. There is a Christie leaflet which you may find helpful 'Skin care during and after your radiotherapy treatment'.

Nausea

Nausea is not likely to occur unless your stomach/abdomen or brain is being treated.

Tiredness

Tiredness is one of the most common side effects of radiotherapy treatment. Some people describe feelings of extreme fatigue, although some continue to work and carry out busy lives as normal. You can help yourself by taking time to rest and relax. Do not be afraid of asking family and friends for help. Some patients find that it helps to have a short rest each day after having their treatment. However, it is beneficial to take gentle exercise as well as taking rest. There is a Christie booklet demonstrating a simple exercise programme. Please ask staff for a copy of the booklet 'Be Active, Stay Active: a guide for exercising during and after treatment for cancer'.

Late or permanent reactions

It is possible for some types of reaction to occur months or years after the treatment has finished, although this is less common these days because of recent improvements in treatment. Your doctor at The Christie will discuss any possible late effects with you, and give you further written information about them if they are at all likely to occur.

Other side effects may appear, depending on the part of the body that has been treated. The radiographers will tell you what to expect. If you have any queries after your treatment, before your follow-up appointment you can ring the radiotherapy department on **0161 446 3485** and ask to speak to a radiographer or nurse. Proton beam therapy patients should speak to their key worker at The Christie, their local key worker, or if their query is urgent contact their GP.

What can the staff do to help?

It is part of the staff's job to help you through any side effects you may have. If you feel uncomfortable in any way, do mention it to the doctor, the nurses or the radiographers. They all want you to be as comfortable as possible.

The side effects, including pain, can worsen as treatment progresses. It is important to tell staff who will be able to prescribe pain relief which should ease your discomfort.

Speak to the staff if you have any problems or concerns – however trivial these may seem.

What can you do to help?

Skin care

- Wash skin gently with warm water using your normal shower or bath products. If preferred, you can wash with an aqueous cream but this has not been shown to reduce the chance of skin reactions occurring. If your skin becomes irritated after using a product, it is advisable to stop using that product for the time being. Pat the skin dry with a soft towel.
- You can continue to moisturise your skin while you are having radiotherapy treatment applying the moisturiser

that you normally use. You do not need to change from this unless you find that your normal moisturiser starts to irritate your skin. Your treatment team may advise you to start moisturising the skin that is included within the treatment area. If they do, we recommend that you avoid products containing 'sodium lauryl sulfate' as this can irritate the skin. Your team can let you know about products that do not have this ingredient. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask a member of your radiographer team for further advice.

- If your skin becomes blistered or broken during treatment, please stop using moisturising cream or lotion in that area.
- If your skin blisters or becomes broken during or in the days after completing radiotherapy treatment, you may need to have a dressing placed over this area to help with the healing process.
- Wear something loose and comfortable. Cotton is best next to the treated skin better than man-made material.
- Men who are having part of their head, face or neck treated should use an electric shaver. Please remember to bring one with you if you are an inpatient.
- Keep the area of skin that has been treated away from direct heat, such as sunlamps, hair-dryers and direct sunlight. You should take extra care of your skin during treatment and as long as the reaction lasts. The skin in the treated area may always be more sensitive, so you will need to take care in the sun, even after your treatment has finished. You can use high protection sun cream on the treated area when the side effects have settled.
- There is more skin care advice in the leaflet 'Skin care during and after your radiotherapy'. Please ask the radiographers for a copy.

Nutritional advice

- It is very important to keep your weight stable before and during the treatment. If you are having difficulty eating, try eating small, frequent meals or snacks. Ask the radiotherapy or nursing staff for a copy of 'Eating – help yourself' which has detailed information about coping with problems such as difficulty in swallowing, nausea and lack of appetite. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids. If you have diabetes and are struggling to eat or have lost your appetite, please ask for a copy of 'Eating well with diabetes when you have a poor appetite'.
- You may need nutritional supplement drinks if you are losing weight or you are not eating very well. Please speak to the radiographers, nurses or Christie doctor if you feel you are losing weight. Ask for a copy of the 'Nutritional products' booklet for ideas. Nutritional supplement drinks are available on prescription from your doctor.

For more information

You may have particular queries that are not answered here. Please do not hesitate to ask the staff.

Relatives and carers

Please share this booklet with your family and friends. It is important that they feel well-informed and understand what is happening. Families and carers can have a role in helping you.

Aftercare

After you have finished your treatment, we will tell you about the arrangements for your first follow-up visit to an outpatient clinic. This visit is for the clinical oncologist to see

how the treatment is working and how any side effects are settling down. Most patients continue to be followed up at an outpatient clinic for several years.

Some people return to The Christie for their follow-up visits. Other people return to a hospital near their home, where they will usually see a visiting Christie doctor. It may be possible to choose the arrangement that suits you and your family.

If you have any problems before you are due for your first visit back to the hospital, ask your clinical nurse specialist or GP for advice. If you were an inpatient you could also ring up your ward at The Christie and speak to a senior nurse. If you have any problems after your first outpatient visit, contact your GP straight away rather than wait for your next appointment. Your doctor may want to arrange an earlier one.

Prescriptions

Since April 2009, NHS patients being treated for cancer are entitled to free prescriptions. You will need an exemption certificate. They are available from The Christie Pharmacy and from your GP.

Car parking

For parking at the main Withington site, please check the website (www.christie.nhs.uk) for the latest details, or ask at the information centre for a copy of the leaflet 'Travelling and car parking for patients and patient's visitors to The Christie'.

The Christie at Oldham and Salford have designated areas for free parking for radiotherapy patients whilst on treatment. It is accessible by code entry that is provided at your first appointment within the unit.

The Christie at Oldham and Salford

The Christie gives radiotherapy treatment at our main Withington site and at radiotherapy centres at Oldham and Salford. If the type of treatment recommended for you is available at Oldham or Salford, your Christie doctor may offer you the treatment there.

All treatments given are identical to those used at the main Withington site. Patients receiving some specialised radiotherapy treatments or chemotherapy and radiotherapy together will still need to have treatment at the main Christie Withington site. The Christie also works with neurosurgeons from Salford Royal to provide specialist treatment for patients with both benign and malignant brain tumours.

Further information

Macmillan Cancer Support

This is a national charity which runs a cancer information service. The cancer support service freephone number is **0808 808 00 00**. (Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm). If you are hard of hearing, use the textphone **0808 808 0121**. If you are a non-English speaker, interpreters are available. Specially trained cancer nurses can give you information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment. Information and advice about finance and benefits are also available.

Macmillan Cancer Support publish booklets which are free to patients, their families and carers. You can get a copy by ringing the freephone number. The information is on their website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Information is available on cancer treatments – such as 'Understanding radiotherapy' and 'Understanding chemotherapy'. There are also booklets on living with cancer – some of these are listed below:

- Talking about your cancer
- Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer
- Cancer and complementary therapies
- Travel and cancer

The cancer information centres have the full range of Macmillan booklets. There are information centres at The Christie at Withington, Salford and Oldham.

Maggie's centre

The centre provides a full programme of practical and emotional support, including psychological support, benefits advice, nutrition and head care workshops, relaxation and stress management.

Maggie's Manchester

Tel: 0161 641 4848 or email

manchester@maggiescentres.org

The Robert Parfett Building, The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, 15 Kinnaird Road, Manchester M20 4QL

Maggie's Oldham

Tel: **0161 989 0550** or email **oldham@maggiescentres.org** The Sir Norman Stoller Building, The Royal Oldham Hospital, Rochdale Road, Oldham OL2 2JH

Cancer information in your language

If English is not your first language, you can speak to a nurse at Cancer Research UK through a qualified interpreter. The service is free and over 170 languages are available on **0808 800 4040**. You can also view all patient information on The Christie website in many languages by using the BrowseAloud function.

Christie information

The Christie produces a range of patient information booklets. Some of these are listed below.

Booklets are free to patients coming to The Christie and are available from the cancer information centre. If you are an inpatient and would like a copy please ask the ward staff. If you are an outpatient please ask your nurse, doctor or radiographer.

Short films about radiotherapy and proton beam therapy can be viewed on The Christie website www.christie.nhs.uk

- Where to get help: services for people with cancer This provides sources of help when you have cancer, where to go for financial help, palliative care and cancer support groups.
- Eating help yourself

This gives advice on eating problems when you don't feel well and you are having treatment. Also see The Christie booklets 'Nutritional products' and 'Eating a regular, easy to chew diet'.

More detailed information on treatment and side effects is available for radiotherapy for:

anal and rectal tumours; prostate; bladder; oesophagus; head and neck; lung; brain; gynaecological cancers; vulval cancer; vaginal brachytherapy; radiotherapy after breast surgery; prostate brachytherapy; superficial radiotherapy to the skin and total skin electron beam therapy.

Coming to the proton beam therapy centre at The Christie

Advice for proton beam therapy patients.

Be Active, Stay Active: a guide for exercising during and after treatment for cancer

A booklet with a simple exercise programme you can follow. There is also more information about coping with fatigue and the benefits of exercise. A short film can be viewed on the website with English subtitles.

Benefits and finance

You may have had to stop work and had a reduction in your income. You may be able to get benefits or other financial help.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a social security benefit and has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for new claimants. It's for people who need help either because of their disability or their illness. You can apply if you are aged 16–64.

People aged 65 or over who need help with personal care or supervision could be entitled to Attendance Allowance.

Your carer could get Carer's Allowance if you have substantial caring needs. Find out more today:

- To get a claim pack for Attendance Allowance, call 0345 605 6055 and for PIP call 0800 917 2222.
- Carer's Allowance: call 0345 608 4321.
- For benefits advice, contact Maggie's centre on **0161 641 4848** or email **manchester@maggiescentres.org**The Christie at Oldham has a benefits advice session on Thursday afternoons, call **0161 918 7745**.
- Contact your local social services department for help with equipment and adaptations, or for an assessment of care needs. Visit www.gov.uk for further information.
- Macmillan Cancer Support can give advice on helping with the cost of cancer on 0808 808 00 00 or www.macmillan.org.uk

Student training

The Christie is a training hospital for postgraduate and undergraduate trainees so you may meet students in all areas of the hospital. We train doctors, nurses, radiographers and other therapists in the treatment and care of cancer patients.

Placements at The Christie are an important part of student training, so by allowing them to assist in your care, you will be making a valuable contribution to student education.

Students are always supervised by fully qualified staff. However, you have the right to decide if students can take part in your care. If you prefer them not to, please tell the doctor, nurse, radiographer or other therapist in charge as soon as possible. You have a right to do this and your treatment will not be affected in any way.

We also try to respect the concerns of patients in relation to the gender of their doctor and other health professionals.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard.

If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice

The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Visit the Cancer Information Centre

The Christie at Withington **0161 446 8100**The Christie at Oldham **0161 918 7745**The Christie at Salford **0161 918 7804**

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Opening times can vary, please ring to check before making a special journey.

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust

Wilmslow Road Manchester M20 4BX

0161 446 3000 www.christie.nhs.uk



The Christie Patient Information Service May 2019 – Review May 2022

CHR/XRT/154/24.06.03 Version 18