

Contact telephone numbers

(Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm)

Nurse specialists

Susan Richardson: **01670 564292 / 07717 868222**

Sarah Curry: **01670 529653 / 07966176106**

Consultant secretaries

Carol Hostler: **01670 564151**

Natalie Hall: **01670 564150**

Louise Collis: **01670 529048**

Gynae Oncology Nurse Specialist secretary

Cheryl Reason: **01670 564176**

Alternative formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511 098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries - **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

Data protection Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

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Living with & beyond
gynaecological cancer

**Patient initiated
follow-up after
completing
radiotherapy to
the pelvis**

Issued by Gynaecology Oncology

Patient initiated follow-up after completing radiotherapy to the pelvis

This leaflet explains what will happen now that you have completed your treatment.

The risk that cancer will come back is different for every woman. By having the treatment recommended by your medical team you have minimized your personal risk as much as possible.

You and your doctor have agreed that you do not need to come to hospital for routine appointments.

There is good evidence to show that having regular follow-up appointments does not help prevent cancer returning or identify any new problems. There is strong evidence that symptoms and concerns are addressed more quickly if patients report them as they occur rather than waiting for a routine follow-up appointment. Now that your treatment is complete you will not be seen regularly at the hospital but the team is still there for you if you need them as is your GP.

Side effects of radiotherapy

People can experience side effects from radiotherapy in the months following treatment or in some cases years later. Some people can experience changes to bladder and bowel function (going to the toilet frequently or needing to go urgently) and difficulties with sexual relationships.

Bowels

Some people may need to open their bowels more often or experience diarrhoea. If this occurs you can try to manage these problems with diet by reducing your intake of fibre rich foods i.e. fruit, vegetables. Using anti-diarrhoea medications such as loperamide can also help. Pelvic floor exercises can also help. If these measures do not improve your symptoms you should speak to your doctor/nurse for further advice. If you experience leakage from the back passage you should speak to your doctor/nurse.

Bladder

Needing to pass urine more regularly can also be a problem. If this occurs try to avoid having too many drinks that contain caffeine, fizzy drinks and fruit juices as these can aggravate the symptoms. Try de-caffeinated tea, coffee or soft drinks. If you experience incontinence when you laugh or sneeze, pelvic floor exercises may help. If this does not improve your GP can prescribe medication to help with this.

Sexual intercourse

Radiotherapy to the pelvis can cause discomfort with sexual intercourse. Vaginal moisturizers and lubricants can help. If you experience difficulties please contact your nurse specialist who can provide further advice.

Following treatment for cancer it is normal to experience some worry and anxiety. If you feel that you are not able to move forwards with your life please speak to your nurse specialist or GP who can refer you for extra support. If you need to be seen by a doctor or a nurse an appointment can be arranged very quickly by the team or you may be advised to see your GP.

When you should contact your GP or hospital team

If you experience any of the problems listed below for more than 2 weeks you should contact your GP or hospital team.

- Frequent need to empty your bowels that is impacting on your quality of life
- Difficulty controlling your bowels
- Lower back or pelvic pain that is getting worse
- Bleeding from the vagina, bowel or bladder
- Any unusual lumps in your groins or neck
- Feeling very tired
- Unexplained weight loss
- Breathlessness/persistent cough

Further information about possible treatment side effects can be found in the booklet you have been given from Macmillan: Pelvic Radiotherapy in Women: Possible Late Effects.

This booklet also contains information on other sources of support and advice.