Men should seek medical advice from their healthcare team if they experience:

- Uncontrolled pain.
- A high temperature and shaking or feeling as if a bad cold is present which could be a sign of infection.
- Prolonged swelling, redness or a foul smelling discharge around the penis which could indicate localised infection.
- Difficulty in passing urine.

Important contact numbers

Specialist Nurse contact no.:

District Nurse contact no.:

Men always need to make sure that the contact details of the specialist team are at hand should they need to contact them prior to follow-up appointments.

Resources...

For further information and support on male cancer, please visit the Orchid website at www.orchid-cancer.org.uk

Orchid has produced a series of leaflets and fact sheets on specific issues relating to male cancer which can be downloaded from the website.

Low-down, Orchid’s newsletter, features the latest news and developments in male cancer including research, treatments, new services and events.

Written and edited by:
Orchid Cancer Appeal and Orchid Editorial Board
March 2017
To be reviewed 2019

References to sources of information used in this booklet are available from Orchid. If you would like to comment on the information included in the booklet or make suggestions about future editions Orchid would like to hear your feedback.

Orchid is the UK’s leading charity dedicated to supporting men and their families who are affected by male-specific cancers: testicular, prostate and penile.

Established in 1996 by a young testicular cancer patient and the oncologist who saved his life, Orchid works to improve the lives of people affected by male cancers through a world class research programme, educational campaigns and raising awareness and an extensive support service.

Orchid has a Male Cancer Helpline manned by specialist nurses on 0808 802 0010 or email helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk

PLEASE REFER TO ORCHID’S BOOKLET PENILE CANCER; WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND ADJUSTING TO LIFE AFTER SURGERY

For further information and support on male cancer, please refer to Orchid’s main booklet: Penile Cancer: What you need to know.

Penile Cancer information sheet

Radiotherapy (localised penile cancer)
Radiotherapy (localised penile cancer)

Radiotherapy is the use of high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells and these can be directed at cancer from outside of the body (external beam radiotherapy) or from within the body (brachytherapy). Both types of radiotherapy can be used to treat penile cancer which is confined to the penis as an alternative to surgery.

External beam radiotherapy

External beam radiotherapy can also sometimes be used to treat other areas of the body that may have been affected by penile cancer.

Before both of these types of radiotherapy are performed the area to be treated will be thoroughly identified by performing scans which can be fitted over the penis and small radioactive wires attached to the penis area around the cancerous area.

Radiotherapy involves radiation being beamed at cancer by an external machine. Treatment tends to be given over a six week period in short doses (10-15 minutes). Beams of radiation are directed at the cancer and the dose of radiotherapy given is controlled by a computer.

Side effects related to radiotherapy treatment

Fatigue

This may be caused by a combination of both treatment and travel. Getting small restful naps or taking a mild sedative medication may help.

Skin reactions

Radiotherapy can irritate the sensitive skin around the penis and the blood supply to the penis may be reduced. These symptoms tend to occur 2-3 weeks from starting external beam radiotherapy and 2-3 weeks after brachytherapy.

Prescription and men should ask their GP or Practice nurse for details of these. It is also possible to purchase a special key (RADAR Key) which allows anyone with a medical condition which has affected their urinary pattern to make use of otherwise locked or inaccessible toilets in the UK. It can be ordered from Disability Rights for a small fee. (www.disabledrightsonline.org.uk/radar-niks-key or 020 7250 8191). A Just Can’t Wait toilet card can also be obtained from the Bladder and Bowel Foundation again for a small fee which is universally recognised and may allow men access to toilets in the same way (https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org.uk/just-cant-wait-card-introduction/ or 01926 357220).

To protect the passage of urine from the bladder a urinary catheter will be inserted.

A catheter is a plastic tube that drains urine from the bladder. It will be connected to a leg drainage bag which can be left in place for up to a week. A bigger bag can be attached to the leg bag for drainage at night.

The catheter is held inside the bladder by a small balloon that is inflated with sterile water following insertion. It will therefore not usually come out unless properly removed by deflating the balloon. The balloon tends to rest over a sensitive area of nerves in the bladder which may be affected by its presence and these nerves are connected to nerves in the penis area. This irritation can make a man feel as if he needs to pass urine urgently and sometimes force a small amount of urine from around the catheter. Using a strap or tape to fix the join of the catheter to the thigh or top of the leg to prevent it from pulling or dragging may be of help.

Men should clean around the penis as instructed by the specialist team and should avoid any toiletries which may cause skin irritation and delay the healing process.

Men should not be pulled or tugged.

It is very important to drink 2-3 litres of fluid daily to flush the urine through and water based drinks tend to prevent bacteria forming which will help prevent urinary tract infection.

When emptying or connecting catheter bags, hands should always be washed thoroughly with soap and water before and after the procedure.

Catheters

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