

## WHAT IS RADIUM 223?

Radium 223 is a type of internal radiotherapy treatment. It is a radioactive form of the metal radium and has the brand name Xofigo.

Your Consultant has recommended that you have treatment with Radium 223 "Xofigo". This treatment is considered by your consultant to be the most suitable method of treating your cancer. Radium 223 therapy has been shown to control the effects of cancer in your bones, leading to better pain control, an improvement in the quality of your life and longer survival.

As the Radium begins to relieve the pain you may find that you can attempt activities that were previously too difficult or painful. Usually there is no problem with this but, if in doubt, seek your doctor's advice.

## HOW DOES RADIUM 223 WORK?

Radium 223 is a radioactive drug that

(sometimes called a cannula) put into a vein, in your arm or hand. The therapy is given in a very small amount of fluid and it will only take a few minutes. Afterwards, the needle will be removed and you will be free to leave the hospital straight away. A small plaster will be placed at the site of the needle insertion which can be removed after a few hours.

The recommended course of treatment is 6 injections given at monthly intervals.

There are no immediate side effects from the treatment when it is given. It will not make you feel sleepy or affect your ability to drive.

On the day of the treatment the Radiotherapy staff will be available to answer any additional questions that you may have.

You should take the following precautions following **EACH** treatment:

- Drink plenty of fluid for a few days
- For the first few days sit down on the toilet when passing urine, instead of standing up or using a urinal.
- Wash hands thoroughly every time you use the toilet
- For 7 days, wipe yourself very carefully after opening your bowels (some hospitals suggest that you use gloves)
- For 7 days, flush the toilet twice after using it; **close the lid before flushing**
- If you share the toilet with other people, wipe the toilet seat after using it
- If clothing becomes soiled with urine or faeces, wash it separately from other clothing
- If you are sexually active, the use of a condom is recommended during intercourse for the first week after each

behaves in a similar way to calcium and collects in the bone metastases. The radioactive particles act on the bone metastases, reducing these and the pain that these can cause. If there are cancer cells in more than one area of bone, the Radium 223 can work well to treat all those areas at the same time.

#### **HOW IS RADIUM 223 ADMINISTERED?**

The treatment will be given by your Consultant Radiation Oncologist who is experienced in giving Radium 223 therapy. The treatment is given in the form of an injection: you will have a small needle

#### **WHAT IF I CANNOT KEEP MY APPOINTMENT?**

If you cannot keep your appointment, contact the UPMC Cancer Centre on 051 337452 straight away. We may be able to offer the treatment to someone else.

#### **AFTER RADIUM 223 TREATMENT**

After each injection, some radiation may be present in your urine for a few hours and in your stools (faeces) for up to 7 days. The total amount of radiation is very small and reduces each day.

injection because there may be some radioactivity in the body fluids.

- If sampling of your blood, urine or stools is necessary during the first week following Radium treatment, please tell the people treating you that you have been treated with radioactive Radium 223. If possible show them your appointment card with our contact details on it.
  - If you need medical care such as an operation or hospital admission during the first week following the treatment, please also inform the staff as above.
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Because of the potential effect of radiation on sperm, you should always use effective contraceptive methods during treatment. It is important to continue this practice for a minimum of 6 months after your Radium 223 treatment is completed. If you have any questions you may contact your consultant or radiotherapy department for advice.

#### **WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF TREATMENT?**

There are no immediate side effects. During the two or three days following your treatment you may feel a slight increase in pain. This is quite normal, and often indicates that treatment is working. This can be relieved by taking your normal painkilling medication. Occasionally you may need to take more painkillers than normal or even start on a stronger painkiller. In this situation you may need to consult your GP.

#### **USEFUL INFORMATION**

**Address:** UPMC Whitfield Cancer Centre,  
Cork Road, Co. Waterford  
**Telephone:** 051337444

## **RADIUM 223 (XOFIGO™) INJECTIONS**



**Website:** [UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie](http://UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie)

In the long term, the pain should hopefully improve as the treatment starts to take effect.

There may also be a slight drop in the number of certain cells in your blood. This rarely causes problems. However, if you develop nose bleeds, excessive bruising or gum bleeding you would need to contact your consultant or GP, and have an urgent blood test arranged.

You may also experience some nausea and diarrhoea. If this is affecting your day-to-day life, you should contact your Consultant or GP, who will be able to prescribe something to help.