



TRANSCRIPT:

Preparing for radiotherapy Part 2c: Getting through external beam radiotherapy

In this video, we asked Anna and Anne to share their recommendations for getting through external beam radiotherapy.

[What advice would you give to someone preparing to start external beam radiotherapy?]

Get your radiotherapy doctor to explain exactly what is going to happen to you and ask them about the possible short- and long-term effects of radiotherapy, and what you can do to try and protect against these.

I would just gather as much information as you can before you go for your first appointment. Be prepared. Ask lots of questions, especially around preparing your body — your bladder and your bowel — for radiotherapy.

Just prepare yourself for having a while there each day. The radiotherapy itself doesn't take long, it's more the preparation, but I soon got into the rhythm and routine of it all, and it became second nature by the end of the five weeks.

If you're starting to feel weaker as your treatment progresses, let your radiotherapy doctor know as they may suggest you have a blood transfusion, and don't try to do too much if you are feeling weak — you need to keep your strength for going to the hospital each day.

It's really important to discuss any side effects that you are having with your radiographers. They are there to help.

[What helped you get through external beam radiotherapy?]

The camaraderie with the other pelvic radiotherapy patients who were all facing the same challenges with the prep as me — we were all a really good support for each other, getting each other through the days when we were finding it tough.

I had to go on my own because we were in lockdown due to COVID, but I certainly would have appreciated having somebody there to support me. Going in every day, you can feel quite emotional, and I think it would have helped having someone there with me.

The radiographers are so professional, and they do an absolutely amazing job. They supported me emotionally, and physically as well, prescribing me things to help get through the bowel wind challenges, and the urinary challenges also.

You will get into a routine, and you will get to know what you are doing. The staff are fantastic, and you will be well supported. And actually, those weeks pass by very quickly, and then you've done it, and what an achievement! I certainly, even having some of the side effects, would do it again if it was recommended.

[Where can I find further information and support?]

There's more information about radiotherapy on our website, including a checklist of things to take with you during treatment, put together by our Peaches community. You can also go to our video titled, 'Accessing support and information', and you can find a list of organisations on the website that provide helpful support and information.