

# Information for patients and carers

## Xofigo™ Radium 223 Treatment

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

## What is Xofigo™?

Xofigo™ is the name of a drug that contains a radioactive substance called Radium 223. Inside the human body radium behaves like calcium and is taken up by the bones, especially those areas cancer may have spread to. Radium 223 is radioactive and gives off powerful, short-range radiation that can kill cancer cells in the skeleton without harming normal tissues.

## Why am I having this treatment?

If you have prostate cancer there is a chance it may spread to your bones. Your doctor may have prescribed testosterone lowering treatment to help prevent this happening, but this does not always work. If your cancer has reached your bones they may weaken or even break. When this happens you may experience pain, numbness or have difficulty moving around. Xofigo™ is a radioactive drug that can reduce these symptoms.

## How is the treatment given?

A full course of therapy consists of 6 intravenous injections. One injection is given every four weeks and is usually administered over a period of 1 minute by a radiographer. You must attend for all 6 injections if you are to gain full benefit of the treatment.

## Can you bring a relative or friend with you?

A relative or friend can accompany you to the hospital but usually they will not be allowed into the room when you have your treatment. Please note that we have limited seating and do not have childcare facilities. Therefore, small children should not attend your appointment.

## Preparation for the treatment

Your doctor will arrange for you to have a blood test before each injection is given. If the number of white cells or platelets is below a

safe level, the treatment will not go ahead. You may eat and drink as normal before each injection.

If you are taking calcium, phosphate and/or vitamin D supplements you should discuss this with your doctor as you may need to stop taking them temporarily.

## Is it safe to have the treatment?

We have been offering Xofigo™ treatment since 2015. In that time, we have treated approximately 500 patients. Xofigo™ treatment has been tested on over 600 men in a clinical trial. Approximately 1 in every 10 patients in that trial did experience some side effects.

The most common side effects were:

- Diarrhoea
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting
- Decrease in the number of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia)

More serious side effects were found in a smaller number of trial patients (less than 10 patients in every 100).

These were mainly:

- Decrease in the number of white blood cells (leukopenia)
- Decrease in the number of a particular type of white blood cell (neutropenia or lymphopenia)
- Decrease in the number of red & white cells and platelets (pancytopenia)
- Pain and swelling at the injection site
- Increased risk of bone fracture, particularly in those with osteoporosis

Contact your doctor immediately if you notice the following symptoms as they may be signs of blood disorders (thrombocytopenia or neutropenia):

- Any unusual bruising
- Excessive bleeding after injury
- Fever
- If you seem to be catching a lot of infections

## What are the benefits of the treatment?

Although Xofigo™ will not cure your prostate cancer there is evidence to show that men who are treated with it:

- Live longer than those who do not receive treatment
- Have fewer and less painful symptoms related to their bones

## Are there any restrictions after the treatment?

After each injection you are free to drive, return to work and engage in social activities as before. You should be aware that for up to one week after the injection your faeces and urine will be slightly radioactive.

During this time, you must do the following:

- Avoid spillages of urine (it is best to sit down while urinating)
- Clean up any spillages immediately and flush the paper down the toilet
- Flush the toilet twice after you have used it
- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after each visit to the toilet
- If faeces come into contact with your clothing, you must change your clothing immediately and wash the soiled clothing separately
- If you vomit for any reason, please contact the department for advice on how to limit potential radiation dose.

## What about sexual activity?

It is safe to engage in sexual activity after the treatment, but because the radiation may damage your sperm you are advised to use effective contraception to prevent pregnancy. You must continue to use contraception for up to 6 months after your final injection.

## Travel abroad

Please inform the Radiographer on arrival if you intend to travel abroad within 7 days of your treatment. Radiation monitoring at security in airports or ports may detect some of the radiation you have received during your scan. We will give you a letter that will state what test you have had, and this can be used when travelling.

## Contact details

If you have a query about your treatment or have any other questions, worries or doubts, do not hesitate to contact the Nuclear Medicine department on **01772 522381**, prior to your appointment.

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-examinations-safety-advice/exposure-to-ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-safety-advice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-examinations-safety-advice/exposure-to-ionising-radiation-from-medical-imaging-safety-advice)

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[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone 08081962638

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.**

**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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**Division:** Diagnostics and Clinical Support

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