

Patient information

Soft Tissue Sarcomas

Cancer Services

What is a Soft Tissue Sarcoma?

A soft tissue sarcoma is a cancer that develops from cells in the soft, supporting tissues of the body. They can occur in muscle, fat, blood vessels or in any of the tissues which support, surround and protect the organs of the body.

There are many types of soft tissue sarcoma which can grow and develop differently. Each type of sarcoma is named after the part of the body in which it started.

These include:

- Fibrosarcoma - starts in the fibrous tissues of the bone. Commonly found in the arms, legs or trunk.
- Myxofibrosarcoma - a fibrous sarcoma that can affect any part of the body, most commonly found in older people.
- Liposarcoma - starts in the body's fat cells. Some can grow very slowly and others more quickly.
- Leiomyosarcoma - starts in the smooth muscle of the body that is not under our conscious control. It can occur anywhere in the body.
- Rhabdomyosarcoma - starts in the active muscles of the body known as skeletal or striated muscle. Can occur mostly in head, neck and pelvis.

Soft tissue sarcomas are rare and about 3000 people a year in the UK are diagnosed. There are a number of other rare forms of sarcomas including peripheral nerve sheath tumours, angiosarcoma, gastrointestinal stromal tumours (GIST) and Ewings sarcoma.

Causes of Soft Tissue Sarcomas

The cause of soft tissue sarcomas is unknown although research is ongoing. There are some risk factors such as exposure to chemicals, previous radiotherapy and some genetic conditions which may play a part. Sarcomas can occur at any age but are most common over the age of 30.

Pathway of care following your diagnosis

This is brief outlook at the pathway of care you will receive following your diagnosis of soft tissue sarcoma. The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital Trust is the regional referral centre for all soft tissue sarcomas and as such has a wide variety of health professionals involved in providing high quality, co-ordinated care.

Initial diagnosis is often made in out patient's clinic following examination by the consultant.

A number of investigations are required by the consultant so the potential diagnosis can be confirmed.

These include:

- Blood Tests.
- X-rays.
- Ultrasound.
- Biopsy.
- CT (Computerised Tomography) Scan.
- MRI (Magnetic resonance imaging) Scan.
- PET (Positron emission tomography) Scan.

All members of the Sarcoma team meet weekly to discuss the results of the various tests in order that a treatment plan can be commenced. This is called a multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting.

The members of the team include:

Surgical Oncology Consultants

- Mr Yin.
- Mr Chandrasekar.

Radiologists

- Dr Mistry.
- Dr Aniq.
- Dr Jain.

Pathologists

- Prof Helliwell.

Medical/Clinical Oncologists

- Dr Ali.
- Dr Alam.

Sarcoma Clinical Nurse Specialists

- Sarah Massey, (based at Royal and Broadgreen Hospital).
- Sian Newbury (based at Royal and Broadgreen Hospital).
- Kate Skinner (based at Clatterbridge Cancer Centre for radiotherapy/chemotherapy support).

Secretarial/Admin Staff

- Jane Hughes

Sarcoma MDT Coordinator

- Joanne McDonough

Once all the investigations have been completed, you will be given an appointment to return to outpatient's clinic so that the consultant will discuss with you of the best course of treatment that is required.

The nurse specialist will be available at every clinic appointment to provide written/verbal advice and support and give you the opportunity to discuss any problems or concerns you may have.

It is possible that you may be required to attend outpatient clinic every one to two weeks until final plans for treatment have been confirmed.

Treatment of sarcomas

Following the confirmation of diagnosis, a number of treatments/procedures may be undertaken in order to treat the sarcoma.

These include:

Surgery

The aim of surgery is to remove as much of the tumour as possible. Occasionally it may be necessary, depending on the size and position of the tumour, for the surgeon to perform reconstructive/plastic surgery to make the area look and function as naturally as possible.

Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy treats cancer by using high energy x-rays to destroy the cancer cells while doing as little harm as possible to normal cells. If it is advised by the consultant, it can be given after surgery or occasionally before surgery in order to shrink the tumour.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is the use of anti-cancer drugs to destroy cancer cells. They are usually given by injection into a vein or sometimes as tablets. Certain types of sarcomas are treated this way and for other types, it is rarely used.

Surgical treatments are usually carried out in Broadgreen Hospital, Liverpool. Radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments are carried out in Clatterbridge Hospital, Bebington, Wirral, for patients from Merseyside and Cheshire, and The Royal Preston Hospital for patients from Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Follow Up

Following any treatment you will be closely monitored by the sarcoma team which will involve a number of visits to the hospital as an outpatient. Regular X- rays and check ups may continue for some years following diagnosis and treatment. The gaps between your appointments will get longer as time goes on.

Support networks

Throughout the treatment there are a number of people available to help you and your family to cope with the overwhelming emotions of being diagnosed with a sarcoma, such as sarcoma nurse specialist, district nurses, social workers and cancer support specialists, Macmillan. Advice about financial help, benefits or work related issues is available through Macmillan cancer support.

Further Information

Your Key Workers at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital:

Sarcoma Nurse Specialists

Tel: 0151 706 5997(office)

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 5997

Tel: 0151 706 2000 and ask to bleep 4008

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000 Bleep 4008

Available Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm

Your Key Worker at the Clatterbridge Cancer Centre Hospital:

Sarcoma Nurse Specialist

Tel: 0151 556 5554 (office)

Text phone number 18001 0151 556 5554

Local Sarcoma Support Group

In this hospital, a patient sarcoma support group meets every two months and is open to patients and carers affected by a sarcoma diagnosis. It aims to offer a chance to share experiences, ask questions and get support from others in a caring safe environment.

Website: www.sarcomanw.weebly.com

Email: nw.sarcoma@gmail.com

Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/sarcomasupport group](https://facebook.com/groups/sarcomasupportgroup)

Sarcoma UK

www.sarcoma.org.uk

Sarcoma UK's website offers basic information about sarcoma and provides links to other appropriate sources of information on the internet.

Macmillan Cancer Support Specialists

The cancer information specialist nurses give information on all aspects of cancer and its treatment, and on the practical, emotional and financial aspects of living with cancer.

Tel: 0808 808 00 00

Line open Monday-Friday, 9am-8pm

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk.

Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service

This service is for people affected by cancer, including family members. They provide a confidential service to talk about issues that are important to you and help you to find a way forward. Please ask your specialist nurse, doctor or GP to refer you.

Author: Cancer Services

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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