

Daily preparation for Radiotherapy Treatment

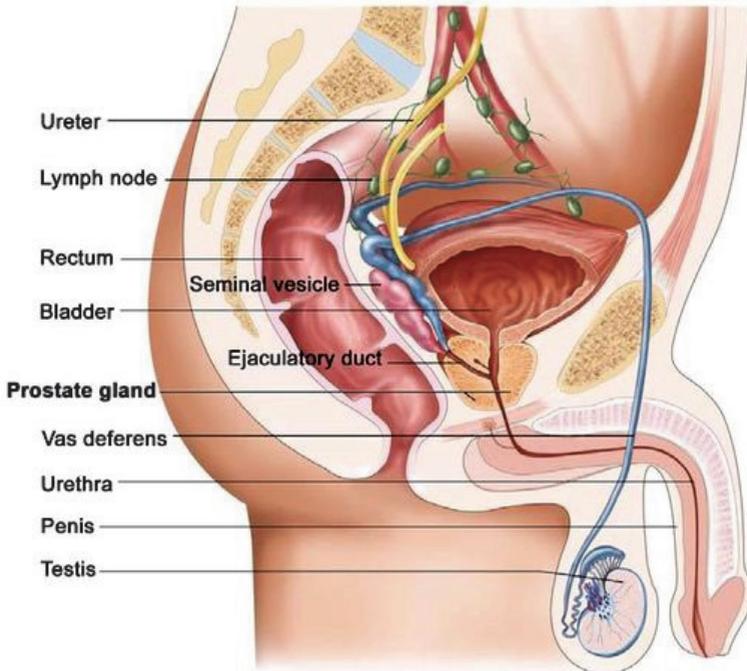
**Important instructions for patients
having a course of radiotherapy for cancer of the prostate**

Introduction

Your oncologist (specialist cancer doctor) has decided that you would benefit from a course of radiotherapy treatment to your prostate or prostate bed. This booklet has been written to provide you with the information you need to prepare yourself every day for your treatment.

Where is my prostate gland located?

Your prostate gland is located directly below your bladder and in front of your rectum (back passage) as shown below.



Why is treatment preparation so important?

Radiotherapy treatment is designed to be extremely accurate to target an area decided by the oncologist. This high level of accuracy ensures that the treatment area can be given the best possible amount of radiation without causing unnecessary damage to the surrounding organs.

In order to maintain this level of accuracy, it is important that the treatment area (the prostate gland or prostate bed) is always in the same place. As you can see from the diagram, the prostate sits very close to both the bladder and the rectum. As both of these structures vary in size depending on how full they are, this can then change the position of the prostate gland.

The following preparation will help to ensure that the bladder and rectum are roughly the same size every day (bladder comfortably full, rectum empty), therefore keeping the prostate gland in a steady position.

Following these instructions will ensure that your treatment is as accurate as possible and will also help to reduce potential side effects.

Preparing for treatment

You will receive a box of micro-enemas, which were prescribed for you by your oncologist or GP prior to starting treatment. This is a medication inserted into the anus which will release any faeces or gas from the rectum. If you have not received these please contact the radiotherapy department before your first appointment for advice.

If your bladder and rectum are not at the right size when you go in for treatment you may be asked to go and do further preparation before you can be treated.

Step One

One hour before your appointment time, use the micro-enema following the instructions provided. If you are unsure about this process please contact the department and ask for further guidance. This is for your treatment appointments only. For your CT planning scan, arrive at the time stated on your appointment letter and you will be given instructions.

Step Two

After approximately ten minutes (this does vary between patients) the enema will begin to take effect and you will feel ready to empty your bowel. You should also empty your bladder at the same time.

Step Three

Roughly 45 minutes before your appointment time, drink 500ml of water in quick succession. This is equal to around four of the plastic cups from the water dispenser or just under a pint. This is important as the water takes a little time to travel through the body to the bladder, which needs to be full in time for your appointment. Do not empty your bladder now until you've had your treatment.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I can't hold my bladder?

If you are very uncomfortable and feel that you really cannot hold on long enough to have your treatment then of course you should empty your bladder. If this happens, fully empty your bladder and inform a member of staff who will advise you on how much more to drink and how long to wait before treatment can be given.

We strongly recommend that you check for any service delays on arrival so that you can change your preparation times accordingly. If you're ever unsure about when to start drinking or are having problems holding your bladder then speak to one of the radiographers for more advice.

What should I do to make this process easier?

There are a few small changes you should make to help make this preparation more effective:

Keeping well hydrated throughout the day will ensure that the water you drink fills your bladder effectively.

Reducing bowel gas is important to give an emptier rectum.

The best ways to do this are:

- Eat slowly, chew food well and don't talk while eating
- Take small sips rather than gulps when drinking and avoid using a straw or drinking straight from a bottle.
- Avoid Chewing gum or sucking boiled sweets
- Avoid fizzy drinks including water, soft drinks, lager and beer.
- Try to keep active: walking or even stretching helps to move gas through the intestine more easily.
- It is important to eat regularly – missing meals can cause excess gas to form.

When should I stop using my micro-enemas?

You should not stop using your enemas until you have had your last radiotherapy treatment. If you are experiencing pain, discomfort or bleeding or if you are suffering from diarrhoea, speak to one of the radiographers who will be able to give you advice and will advise you to stop using them if necessary.

Contacts

You will see a team of radiographers every day who can provide you with support and information to help you through your treatment. If you have any further concerns or enquiries or would like to know more about anything in this leaflet please contact:

Raxa Ford (Senior Lead Radiographer): 01273 664 901

Useful Contacts

Radiotherapy Reception (RSCH): 01273 664 901

Preston Park Radiotherapy Centre: 01273 665190

Macmillan Counselling Service: 01273 664 694

Useful National Contacts

Macmillan Cancer Support:

Call 0808 808 0000 or visit www.macmillan.org.uk

Prostate Cancer UK:

Call 0800 074 8386 or visit www.prostatecanceruk.org

Cancer Help (Cancer Research UK Advice & Support):

Call 0800 226 237

or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/copingwithcancer

For information on local support groups, please speak to a member of staff.

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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