

Patient information factsheet

Preparation for radiotherapy treatment to the prostate or prostate bed

This leaflet explains the preparation you need to do for your planning CT scan and radiotherapy treatment.

Ideally, we would like you to follow this advice for at least two weeks before your planning CT scan, but if this is not possible please start as soon as you can.

Why is preparation important?

As the diagram shows, your prostate, bladder and rectum are closely related. The contents and size of your bladder and rectum can affect the position of your prostate or prostate bed.

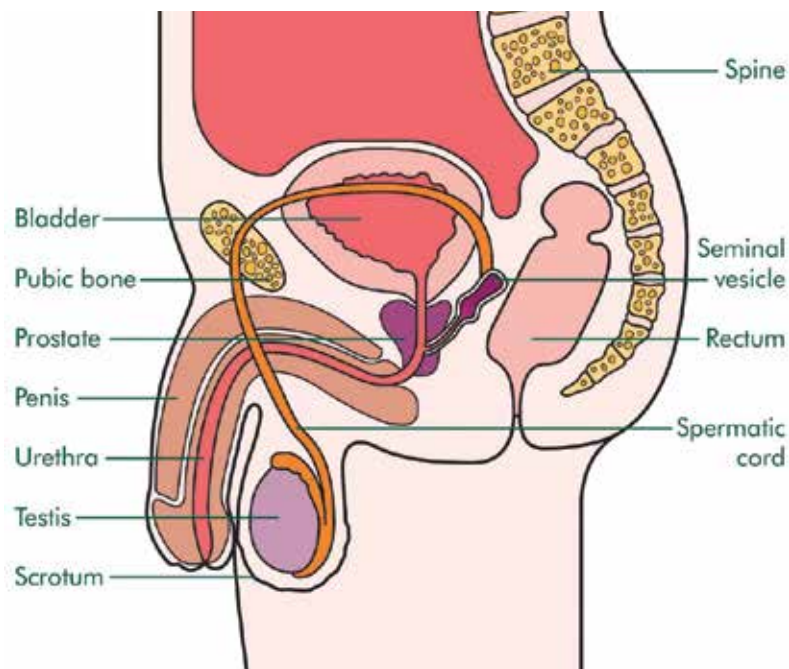


Image courtesy of Macmillan Cancer Support

If the contents of the bladder and rectum vary between the day you have your CT scan and your daily treatment, it could mean the prostate is in a different position to the one we have planned for.

Our advice aims to help you establish regular bowel movements and increase hydration so that:

- the contents of your rectum are consistent in size
- the build-up of intestinal gas is reduced
- the bladder is a consistent size (meaning there is less bladder and small bowel in the treatment area)
- the accuracy of your treatment is increased
- the risk of any long-term bowel side effects is reduced

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How to prepare your bladder and bowels

Drink plenty of fluids – increase your daily fluid intake by drinking at least two litres (three pints) of water or squash, on top of any hot drinks you may have. Try having a glass of water with each meal and then sip throughout the day.

Keep hydrated – drink extra fluids on hot days and after exercise. This also helps to keep your bowels moving.

Eat regularly – eat frequent meals which keep your bowels moving. Skipping meals and not eating can lead to increased fullness of your rectum and can increase the wind in your bowels.

Avoid or reduce the amount of foods you eat that can cause wind or bloating such as:

- vegetables in the brassica family (cabbages, sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower)
- dried fruits, especially in muesli or similar cereals
- high fat and greasy foods
- onions and lentils
- carbonated drinks (soft and alcoholic)
- really spicy foods
- excessive amounts of fruit

Exercise regularly – gentle exercise such as walking and stretching can help move wind and regulate your bowel movements.

Do not take a laxative – some laxatives can cause an increase in wind, so do not take any unless they have been prescribed for you by a doctor. If you are taking a laxative, please tell the radiographer.

Avoid swallowing air when you eat:

- eat slowly and chew food well
- chew with your mouth closed
- avoid chewing gum
- sip drinks rather than gulping

This should help reduce wind and establish regular bowel habits.

On the day of your planning CT scan

- Eat and drink as you usually would, unless you have been told that you require IV contrast.
- Try to have a bowel movement, without straining, before your appointment and be prepared to be asked about your bowel habits.

The radiographers will explain your scan procedure. You will be asked to empty your bladder (and bowels if you haven't already done so), and they will provide you with a measured jug of flavoured water to drink.

- **Drink all the flavoured water** within the **first ten minutes** and then wait at least 20 minutes for your bladder to fill.

You will follow the same procedure to fill your bladder before each treatment.

When your bladder feels comfortably full the radiographers will take you in for your planning CT scan.

If your rectum is too full or your bladder is not full enough, the scan will not be completed. The radiographers will advise you on what you need to do before they try another scan.

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If the second scan does not go ahead for any reason, the radiographers or doctor will discuss two options with you:

- 1) You may be sent home with a mild laxative and asked to return in a week's time.
- 2) You may be asked to use a mini enema to clear the rectum of wind or solid waste.

At the end of your appointment the radiographers will let you know how much you need to drink (cups or ml) and over how long you need to drink it (mins), in preparation for each radiotherapy treatment.

Your first radiotherapy treatment appointment

Please arrive with enough time to fill your bladder ready for your appointment and expect to be with us for at least two hours each day. You should eat normally before your treatment.

Check in with reception and you will be directed to the appropriate waiting room. Take a seat and a radiographer will come and talk to you. They will explain the treatment process and then ask you to follow the bladder filling instructions.

- Drink **all** your water quantity within the **first ten minutes**, the remaining time allows your bladder to fill to the same size as for your planning CT scan.

The remainder of your treatment

Each day of your treatment, you will have a scan which will allow us to check the position of your prostate specifically for the treatment. If there is too much wind, your rectum is too full or there isn't enough fluid in your bladder, the treatment will not go ahead.

If any of this is found to be the case, the radiographers will advise you on what you need to do so that they can treat you successfully.

If you have any queries or require further information please contact Radiotherapy reception on 023 8120 8568

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688.