

## Patient information factsheet

# Preparing your bladder and bowel for radiotherapy to the prostate or prostate bed

We have given you this factsheet because you are due to have radiotherapy treatment to your prostate or prostate bed. Before you start this treatment, you will have a planning CT scan. For both the planning CT scan and radiotherapy treatment, you will need to prepare your bladder and bowel.

This factsheet explains how to prepare your bladder and bowel. It is important that you follow this advice for **at least two weeks before your planning CT scan** (if this is not possible, please start as soon as you can) **and continue until your final radiotherapy treatment appointment**. We hope this factsheet helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

### Why do I need to prepare my bladder and bowel?

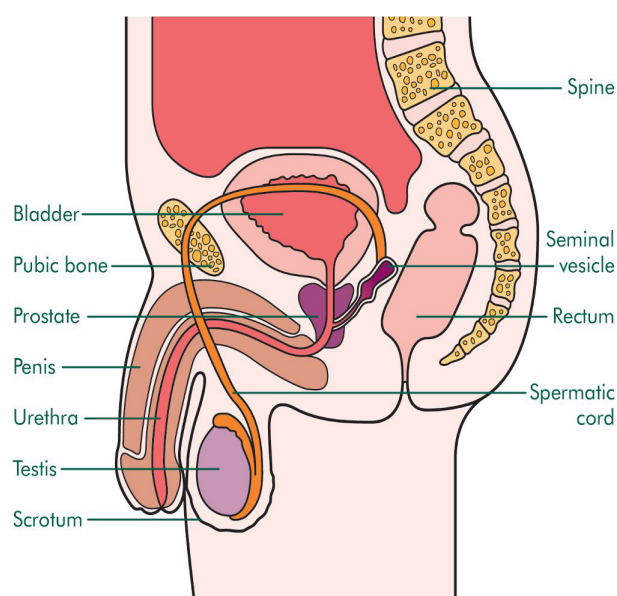
As the diagram shows, your prostate, bladder and rectum (back passage) are close to each other.

The contents and size of your bladder and rectum can affect the position of your prostate or prostate bed.

If the contents and size of your bladder and rectum vary significantly between your planning CT scan appointment and your radiotherapy treatment appointments, it could mean your prostate is in a different position to the one we have planned for and may affect the accuracy of the treatment.

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

- the contents and size of your bladder and rectum are consistent
- the build-up of intestinal gas is reduced
- the accuracy of your treatment is increased
- the risk of any long-term bowel side effects is reduced



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## How do I prepare my bladder and bowel?

The following advice will help to reduce wind, make your poo softer and easier to pass and establish a regular routine of bowel movements.

### Drinks

- To help you stay hydrated, gradually increase your daily fluid intake over one to two weeks until you are drinking at least two litres (four pints) of water or squash, on top of any hot drinks you may have.
- Reduce your caffeinated drinks (tea and coffee) to a maximum of four cups per day.

### Helpful tips

- Try having a glass of water with each meal and then sip water throughout the day.
- Try drinking more in the morning and reducing the amount you drink before going to bed.
- Warmer water is easier for sensitive bladders to hold.
- Consider choosing decaffeinated options where available.
- Flavour your water with squash, juice, cordial or fruit.
- Herbal or fruit teas are a great alternative to water (peppermint tea and ginger tea can also help reduce wind).
- On hot days, you may need to drink a little more due to sweating or hot flushes.

### Food

- Have regular meals and snacks each day.
- **Avoid or reduce** the amount of foods you eat that are known to cause wind and/or bloating, such as:
  - vegetables in the brassica family (cabbages, sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower)
  - dried fruits, especially in muesli or similar cereals
  - greasy and high-fat foods
  - onions and lentils
  - carbonated drinks (soft and alcoholic)
  - really spicy foods
- Avoid swallowing air when you eat by:
  - eating slowly and chewing food well
  - chewing with your mouth closed
  - avoiding chewing gum
  - sipping drinks rather than gulping

### Helpful tips

- Eating regularly will cause you to pass stools (poo) more regularly.
- Skipping meals and not eating can lead to increased fullness of your rectum and can increase the wind in your bowel.

### Laxatives

Taking a new laxative can sometimes cause wind. If you have been prescribed laxatives by a healthcare professional, continue to take them as advised. If you think you might benefit from taking a laxative, please contact us.

### Exercise

Gentle exercise such as walking and stretching can help move wind and regulate your bowel movements.

## Practise filling your bladder

For your planning CT scan appointment and for each radiotherapy treatment appointment, you will need to fill your bladder and hold it for approximately 45 minutes in total (30 minutes to prepare your bladder and 15 minutes to complete the treatment). To help you get used to filling your bladder and holding it, we advise practising at home using the instructions below before your planning CT scan.

## How to fill your bladder

1. Empty your bladder fully.
2. Drink 500ml of water within 10 minutes.
3. Hold your bladder for a total of 45 minutes.
4. After 45 minutes, you can empty your bladder.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

## Radiotherapy reception

Telephone: **023 8120 8568** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

## Useful links

[www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/prostate-cancer/treatment/radiotherapy/external-radiotherapy/planning-radiotherapy](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/prostate-cancer/treatment/radiotherapy/external-radiotherapy/planning-radiotherapy)

[www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatments-and-drugs/radiotherapy-for-prostate-cancer](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatments-and-drugs/radiotherapy-for-prostate-cancer)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ct-scan)

Image courtesy of Macmillan Cancer Support

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**