Bowel and bladder preparation for radiotherapy to the prostate

Information for patients, carers and their families

For your radiation treatment the Radiation Oncologist has requested you have a full bladder and empty rectum for your CT scan and for the duration of your radiation therapy treatment.

It is important to have a full bladder and empty bowel for treatment to the prostate because it helps to reduce side effects related to this type of treatment.

The bladder and bowel are in close proximity to the prostate. By ensuring the bladder is full and the bowel is empty each day, we are able to keep the prostate in a consistent position for each radiotherapy treatment. This can reduce the exposure to those organs and reduce the possibility of side effects.

If you have any medical conditions, e.g. kidney or cardiac disease, that may affect your ability to follow these instructions, please inform your Radiation Oncology team.

**Bladder preparation**

A week before your CT/MRI planning appointment, start drinking fluids regularly throughout the day. Maintain an intake of at least 1.5L per day (preferably water). This will ensure you remain well hydrated throughout treatment, to be able to achieve a consistently full bladder during preparation for each treatment session.

If you are currently taking heart medication, do not commence drinking more fluids until you have talked to your Radiation Oncology team.

**Bowel preparation**

In order to maintain daily bowel motions, begin taking ClearLax or Movicol daily with water five days before your CT/MRI planning appointment.

By following the supplied ‘Bowel preparation instructions’ and ‘Dietary guidelines for pelvis radiotherapy’, it may potentially help reduce the amount of gas and residue in your bowels which helps achieve a stable prostate position as well.

Other suggestions to minimise gas formation include:

- Eat slowly, chewing food well and with your mouth closed
- Avoid skipping meals
- Sip fluids rather than gulping and avoiding drinking with a straw
- Increase gentle physical activity.

Inform the Radiation Therapists before your CT planning appointment if the above steps do not help you achieve regular bowel motion.

**On the day of your scan and on treatment days**

Before you attend your appointment, try to empty your bowels and bladder.

Arrive 30 to 40 minutes prior to your CT/MRI appointment and drink 600mL water (two cups) when prompted by a Radiation Therapist. There will be no Radiation Therapist at the MRI appointment.

At the CT appointment the Radiation Therapists will explain the procedure and position you on the treatment couch. During the scan they will check the volume of the bladder and bowel.

If the bladder is not full enough, the Radiation Therapists will inform and ask you to drink more water, alternatively a bladder which is too full may need some emptying.

If the bowel is distended with solid/gas, the Radiation Therapists will ask you to try to go to the toilet again to empty. The scan can be repeated on the same day or may be arranged for an alternative day. Please do not be concerned if this happens.

Please ensure you follow these instructions throughout your treatment appointments.