Prostate Cancer; Preparation prior to radiotherapy planning and treatment

This leaflet is for patients who are going to receive radiotherapy to their prostate gland or the prostate bed (where the prostate was) and will explain and describe the simple preparation process to be followed at the planning (and treatment) appointments.

If you have any concerns before attending, please contact our Information & Support Radiographer.

Please read these instructions to help you prepare and understand the process. We recommend, starting 10 days before the planning appointment and during the course of treatment, that you should aim to drink 1.5 litres (3 pints) of fluid each day, if possible.

If you are taking diuretics (water tablets) and appointment time
Diuretics are used to treat a number of conditions and work by removing excess fluid from the body by increasing the production and flow of urine. They are usually taken in the morning. Consequently, some men who have a morning appointment may be concerned about the effect of the diuretic while travelling to the hospital. If so, it is OK to take the diuretic as soon as you can after your appointment.

If you attend in the afternoon, take your diuretic as usual.

About the planning appointment
When you arrive, we may first ask you to drink some water in order to ensure any dehydration (lack of fluid in the body) is corrected. Later, we will ask you to drink again as part of the preparation process, as described later.

The planning staff will discuss with you what to expect. This includes the preparation process, which includes the use of a small enema to empty the rectum, making it smaller and moving it away from the area to be treated (target area). We also need fluid in the bladder to help move the small bowel away from the target area. If you are worried that you will have problems with the preparation process, please raise any concerns with the planning staff. Following the preparation you will have a CT scan. If you have an artificial hip(s) please alert the radiographers beforehand. The preparation usually takes about 35 minutes and the scan procedure 10 minutes.

You will need to repeat the preparation before every treatment. You may not be keen on the prospect of needing to use micro enema each day, but research at this centre has shown that the use of micro enema is beneficial and that patients tolerate this procedure well.

Why is the preparation important?
The aim of the preparation procedure is twofold;

- To ensure we hit the target area with each treatment.
To achieve this we need to replicate the position of the target area on the day of the scan at every treatment so that the x-ray beams hit that area. The target area is later defined on the scan images by the oncology doctors. It includes the prostate area (and any structures identified as being involved by previous investigations) plus a small band of tissue next to the target used as a safety margin. The target area receives the highest dose of radiation and is individually designed according to your internal anatomy.
To help to reduce short and long-term side effects. When the preparation process as described here is achieved, the structures around the target area (rectum, bladder, and small bowel) are moved away, helping to reduce the radiation dose to these structures. (Please refer to our leaflet ‘Radiotherapy to the Prostate’ for more information on side effects).

Diagram to show position of the prostate

An example of a micro enema

About the simple bowel and bladder preparation just prior to the scan.
The use of a micro enema causes your rectum to empty with a small bowel movement or passing of wind. It should feel similar to the usual sensation of needing a bowel movement and be under your control. If you have already opened your bowels on the day of the scan, the use of micro enema is still necessary to help to ensure that the rectum is empty at the time of the scan.

- Micro enema is contained in a small tube with a nozzle (see picture). The medication (5mls) is inserted into your rectum via the nozzle. You will be asked to go to the toilet and do this yourself.

The need to have a bowel movement is usually felt within 10-15 minutes, with most patients needing to visit the toilet only once. You may only pass wind. However, before your scan, please empty your bowel as often as you feel the need to do so.

To prepare the bladder, you will be asked to empty the contents of your bladder into the toilet - then drink a specified volume of water (3 cups).

- When you empty your bladder, you should do so using your normal amount of force and time. Do not strain to empty every last drop of fluid from your bladder. The fluid you drink afterwards will then refill your bladder. Water fountains are sited in the waiting area.

We will supply you with the tube of micro enema. Toilets are located close to the planning area.
What to do: start when instructed by the planning staff.

1. Use the micro enema
   Go to the toilet with the tube of micro enema and break off the cap. To make it easier to insert the nozzle into your rectum, squeeze out a small drop of fluid and spread it over the nozzle. Gently insert the nozzle fully into your rectum and squeeze out all contents of the tube. Keep squeezing the tube as you remove it. This action prevents the medication from being drawn back into the nozzle. It is ok to empty your bladder at this time, if needed. Wash and dry your hands before leaving the toilet.

2. Return to the waiting room or walk around and wait for the enema to have its effect; this is usually within 15 minutes, but empty your bowel when you feel the urge to do so. However, if after 15 minutes you have not had the urge to have a bowel movement, please try to do so.

3. When you do go to the toilet, also empty your bladder and then continue with the instructions below.

4. Return to the waiting room; you now need to drink three cups of fluid in quick succession. Use the plastic cups next to the water barrel in the waiting room, filling each cup to the level of highest ridge.

5. Tell our planning receptionist when you finish the last cup. Now do not drink any more fluid or empty your bladder until after the scan, which will be in approximately 20 minutes.

A poster in the toilet opposite the planning waiting room displays these instructions

Please note:
- It is ok to empty your bowel at any point before your scan.
- If you have an urgent need to empty your bladder between drinking the last cup and your scan, please alert the receptionist.
- In the event that your rectum is already empty, micro enema will have little effect. If this is the case, please do not be concerned.

Additional information
After your planning scan, you will be issued with a supply of micro enema to use during your treatment. Bring one tube with you each day. You can be supplied with a replacement if you forget your supply. We will ask you to arrive ahead of the appointment time in order to do the preparation. You may find it helpful to bring these instructions with you.

Contact at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre
Please ring the Information & Support Radiographer on 0151 482 7889 if you require further information etc.

Website
www.clatterbridgecc.nhs.uk