

Radiotherapy Department

# Pelvic radiotherapy: bladder and bowel preparation

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet aims to help you prepare for radiotherapy to the pelvis. It provides advice on bladder and bowel preparation. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask the radiographers when you are at your appointment.

### Why bladder and bowel preparation is important

A full bladder and an empty bowel are important to increase the accuracy of radiotherapy. It also reduces the side effects from radiotherapy. Having a full bladder and an empty bowel helps ensure that the same area is treated every day.

A full bladder helps to push the small bowel up and out of the pelvis – so it is moved away from the radiotherapy treatment area. An empty bowel means the other structures near and around the rectum (lower part of the bowel) are less likely to move, thus allowing the most accurate radiotherapy.

You will need a full bladder and empty rectum for both your CT planning scan and each radiotherapy treatment.

### Preparation: in the weeks before your treatment

#### **Bladder preparation:**

You will need to practice filling your bladder and keeping it full. We suggest you start practising every day from the day the doctor sees you in clinic.

To practice, you should empty your bladder and then drink 300 millilitres (ml) of water (approximately 2 small glasses). You should then try and hold this for 45 minutes before emptying your bladder again.

#### **If you struggle to hold water in your bladder:**

If after practicing at home you are unable to hold 300ml, then reduce the amount to 250ml and hold for 45 minutes. If you still can't hold it, then reduce the amount of water until you can hold for 45 minutes. Aim to increase it each day until you can hold 300ml for 45 minutes.

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For patients undergoing prostate radiotherapy we appreciate this bladder preparation may not be achievable and therefore we ask you to increase your water intake to a level that is comfortable for you.

### **Bowel preparation:**

From the day you are seen in clinic it is important to start:

- reducing any foods and drinks that make you gassy, e.g. fizzy drinks, beans and pulses, spicy foods, green leafy vegetables
- regularly exercising to encourage bowel movements
- staying well hydrated (drinking plenty of water)

## Preparation: in the days before your appointment

Before attending for both your planning CT scan and each radiotherapy treatment, you will need to ensure that you are **well hydrated** (drinking lots of fluid).

In the days leading up to the start of your treatment, we recommend that you aim to drink **1.5- 2 litres (2.5- 3.5 pints) of water** throughout the day. If you have cardiac or renal problems, please discuss this with your oncologist as adjustments may need to be made.

Fluids can include water and diluted squash but do **not** include tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, fruit juices and alcoholic drinks.

## Preparation: on the day of your appointment

Please try to empty your bowels before your appointment and drink enough fluid to have a full bladder.

## At your appointment

Before each treatment we will do a preliminary scan to assess your rectum and bladder. If there are any problems with the preparation, the radiographers may ask you to try and poo again or drink more water. Once the scan confirms that the bowel and bladder are in the right place, we will start your treatment.

## Useful numbers

General enquiries:	020 331 11737	(09.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday)
Appointment enquiries:	020 331 11612	(09.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday)
Appointment enquiries e-mail:	<b>imperial.radiotherapybookings@nhs.net</b>	
Transport enquiries:	033 067 81245	(09.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday)

## Further sources of support and information

**Macmillan cancer navigator service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

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This is a single point of contact for cancer patients at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, and their family, friends and carers. The service is here to help you to navigate your care and

resolve queries that you may have. Our Navigators can access information about your appointments, connect you to appropriate services and signpost you on to further support.

They can also book you in for a telephone call back from your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) if you have a question that needs clinical input.

The service is open Monday to Friday 08:30 to 16:30 excluding bank holidays. (The service is closed for training between 14.00-14.45 on Thursdays.)

Call: **020 3313 0303**

### **Macmillan cancer information and support service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

The Macmillan cancer information and support service offers free support and information to anyone affected by cancer, including family and loved ones. The service has physical centres at Charing Cross and Hammersmith Hospitals, and also offers virtual and telephone support.

When you call or visit you can speak to one of the Macmillan cancer team one-on-one about whatever matters most to you. You can sign up to a range of weekly virtual groups that provide the opportunity to connect with other people with cancer in a relaxed environment. You can also speak to our Macmillan welfare and benefits adviser, who can offer patients of the Trust tailored advice on additional financial support.

The service is open Monday-Thursday (excluding bank holidays,) with various drop-ins available within our physical centres. For more information please call us on **020 3313 5170** or email [imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net)

### **Maggie's West London**

Maggie's is a cancer charity that provides the emotional, practical and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends.

The centre offers a calming and beautiful space, a professional team of support staff, and the opportunity to talk and share with a community of people who have been through cancer too.

Maggie's centres are warm, friendly and informal places full of light and open space, with a big kitchen table at the heart of the building. Maggie's West London is located in the grounds of Charing Cross Hospital but is independent of our hospital.

For more information on getting started on Radiotherapy please drop in or call: **020 7386 1750**

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The centre is open Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00.

### Macmillan Support Line

The Macmillan Support Line offers confidential support to people living with cancer and their loved ones. This support line is a national line provided by Macmillan and is independent of our hospital. The Support Line is open every day, 08:00 to 20:00. Please call: **0808 808 000** or visit [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

### How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

### Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

**Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website:**  
[www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)