



**University Hospitals Birmingham**  
NHS Foundation Trust



# Preparing for radiotherapy to the pelvis

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## Preparing for radiotherapy to the pelvis

**This leaflet is for people who have been recommended to receive radiotherapy to the pelvis. It will explain what you need to do before you attend your radiotherapy CT planning appointment and it explains what will happen at your CT scan.**

### Why do I need to follow these instructions?

As all of the organs in the pelvis sit very close to each other, following these instructions will help to ensure that your internal organs are in the same position for treatment each day.

Ideally, we would like you to have a comfortably full bladder and an empty rectum (back passage) for both your planning scan and for each of your radiotherapy treatments.

A full bladder can help to reduce the side effects of your treatment by moving the rectum (back passage), bladder and small bowel away from the treatment area. Therefore it is important that you are well hydrated. This is explained in more detail in the next section of this leaflet.

To empty your rectum we would like you to use a micro-enema (laxatives). This is explained in more detail later in this leaflet.

### How can I be sure I am well hydrated?

From today onwards, we ask you to aim to drink 2–3 litres (4–5 pints) of fluid per day. This quantity can be spread out during the day, but avoid drinking excessively in the evening. The fluid does not have to be water, but we do suggest reducing your intake of caffeinated tea or coffee, fizzy and alcoholic drinks.

### How can I have a 'comfortably full' bladder?

As well as ensuring that you drink 2–3 litres (4–5 pints) of fluid throughout the day, it may be beneficial to your treatment to practice filling your bladder and keeping it full. We suggest you empty your bladder and drink 500ml (approximately 1 pint) of water within five minutes, then try to wait for one hour before passing water.

Please try to do this every day before you attend your CT appointment.

## What if I cannot wait that long?

If you cannot hold 500ml of liquid in your bladder and you need to pass water, try 400ml and again hold for one hour. If you still cannot hold on, try decreasing the amount of fluid you drink until you find your comfortable amount. Then increase the volume of water daily aiming to get closer to 500ml.

## How do I use the micro-enema?

You will be asked to use a micro-enema to empty your back passage before the CT scan. To do this you will need to insert liquid from the enema tube into your back passage (as explained below). The enema then causes your body to empty faeces (poo) from your back passage.

These enemas are safe to use unless you are allergic to any of the following ingredients:

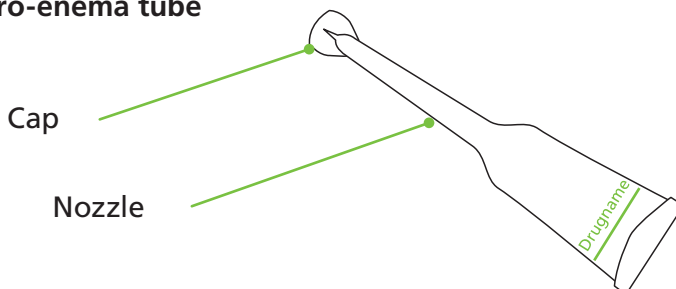
- Sodium citrate
- Sodium lauryl sulphate
- Sorbitol

**Or**

- You have an inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's.
- If you think you this may apply to you, please discuss with the radiographer at your scan appointment.

A radiographer will explain the procedures below at your CT appointment and will give you a supply of micro-enemas to keep at home.

### Micro-enema tube



## To use the micro–enema:

1. Take an enema tube from the packet and go into the toilet
2. Pull or twist the cap off the end of the nozzle
3. Squeeze a drop of liquid onto your finger and smear over the nozzle
4. Insert the full length of the nozzle into your back passage
5. Gently squeeze the tube until it is empty
6. Keep squeezing the tube as you pull the nozzle out of your back passage.  
This is to stop the medicine being drawn back into the tube
7. Throw the empty tube into the bin
8. Go back into the waiting room and wait for 15 minutes or until you feel the need to empty your bowels
9. Go back into the toilet and try to empty your bowels. Please do not strain and do not worry if you cannot empty your bowels or if only wind is passed – it may be that your back passage is already empty
10. Empty your bladder at the same time. If you have a catheter please ask the radiographers for a clamp and clamp it shut

## To fill your bladder:

11. When you have emptied your bowels you now need to fill your bladder.  
When you return to the waiting room, you should drink four cups or 1 pint (½ litre) of water in no more than five minutes
12. Your bladder will take at least 30 minutes to fill up after finishing drinking. Please tell the radiographers if you need more filling time
13. If you find that your bladder becomes uncomfortably full, please tell the radiographers. You may need to empty your bladder, drink and fill again.  
This may delay your appointment time

## What if there is a delay?

If you are kept waiting and are unable to hold your bladder full, please tell the radiographers. You may need to empty your bladder, drink and fill again with approximately half the amount of fluid (1–2 cups). Please discuss this with the radiographers if you are unsure of what to do.

If more than two hours passes since you emptied your bowels, please tell the radiographers. You may need to repeat using the micro-enema.

## What if I have a question about my CT appointment?

If you have any questions about preparing for radiotherapy to the pelvis, please contact the radiotherapy department.

You can contact the CT radiographers on **0121 371 5055**. Alternatively, you can contact the review radiographers on, **0121 371 3553**. Both teams will be able to answer your questions.

For further information about your cancer or radiotherapy in general, please visit the Patrick Room in the foyer of the Cancer Centre, located in the Heritage Building (Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham).

## What happens at my CT appointment?

Please arrive for your CT scan approximately 10 minutes before the appointment time on your letter.

When you arrive for your appointment the radiographers will explain to you what will happen during your CT appointment and answer any questions you may have.

They will explain how to use a micro enema (rectal laxatives) and will ask you to empty your back passage. They will also explain how to fill your bladder. Once you have used the enema and have been to the toilet you will be asked to drink four cups of water in no more than five minutes. There will then be a delay of 30 minutes to allow your bladder to fill and after this the radiographers will then proceed with your planning CT scan.

There is a water machine available in the radiotherapy department but you are welcome to bring your own preferred drink with you if you wish.

For some patients the CT scan is done with contrast (dye) which will involve an injection into a vein. The contrast is used to make it easier for the doctor to plan your radiotherapy treatment.

If you are to have contrast as part of your planning CT the radiographers will discuss this with you. If you have ever had a reaction to contrast before then please let them know. For your scan, you will need to remove all of

your clothes below the waist apart from your underwear. This area will be covered with a paper sheet during the procedure. It may be easier to wear a skirt or trousers rather than a one piece garment to this appointment.

During the CT scan some marks will be drawn on your skin to aid the planning of your radiotherapy treatment. After the scan, the radiographers will ask permission to make three to four tiny permanent dots, called tattoos, which are the size of a small freckle. The tattoos do not indicate where you need treatment or the position of the tumour but are used to ensure you lie in the correct position each day. The non-permanent marks can then be washed off when you get home.

If you decide that you really do not want these tattoos, please discuss other alternatives available with the radiographers at the time of your CT scan.

The CT appointment will take approximately 90 minutes and once completed you will be given an appointment for your first radiotherapy treatment. There will be a time delay between your CT planning scan and the start of your radiotherapy treatment because your treatment now needs to be planned and this can be a complex process involving your doctor and a team of other professionals.

The routine hours of the radiotherapy department are between 08:00–18:00. If you have a need for a certain appointment time on a specific day it is best to ask at the earliest available opportunity once you have started radiotherapy to avoid disappointment.

It may not always be possible to accommodate all patient requests as we are a very busy department, with approximately 250–300 patients on treatment each day.

If you require hospital transport for your radiotherapy treatment please discuss this with the radiographers at your CT scan.

After your CT appointment you will be given another booklet explaining your radiotherapy treatment and it will have information on expected side effects

and how to look after your skin during treatment.

## **CCTV Monitors**

The treatment rooms are located on the ground floor of the radiotherapy department and you will be shown where your treatment room is located and where to report to on your first day of treatment before you leave.

The treatment rooms are monitored during your preparation for treatment, positioning and treatment delivery by television cameras. This is part of ensuring the accuracy of your treatment and your safety and wellbeing in the rooms at all times. We assure you that the camera image feed is live and it is not possible to make a recording.

The images are viewable on screens situated in the machine control areas. The control areas are only accessed by authorised radiotherapy staff, some who may not be directly involved with your care at that time. If you have any concerns about your privacy or dignity, that you have not already discussed then please do not hesitate to highlight your concerns during the information discussion with the radiographers at your first treatment appointment.

## **Attending your CT scan**

### **Train**

University Station is the closest train station to the hospital and is only a 5–10 minute walk away and there is also a shuttle bus running from the train station to the Cancer Centre, Heritage Building (Queen Elizabeth Hospital) for those patients who have difficulty walking.

### **Driving**

Car parking in Car Park D is free for patients attending for daily radiotherapy treatment. Car Park D is located directly opposite the doors to the Cancer Centre, Heritage Building (Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham). The postcode for your satellite navigation device is B15 2GW.

If you do drive, please bring in the ticket you have taken to access the car park along with the car registration number, the radiographers will exchange this for a prepaid one so you may exit the car park without charge.

## Hospital transport

Hospital transport is only provided if you have a medical need that stops you from using private or public transport. If you need any help/advice, please contact: Patient Transport Services on **0121 728 9875** (Monday–Friday between 08:00–18:00 hours).

If you use hospital transport it can mean spending many hours away from home and travelling long distances (you will be collected/returned on a schedule) therefore we recommend you use other transport if you can. Please ask staff for details.

## Helpful organisations

**Macmillan:** Website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk), Tel: 0808 8080000

### How did we do? 😊 😐 😞

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you.**

**[www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft)**



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### The Radiotherapy Department

Heritage Building (Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham)  
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TH  
Telephone: 0121 371 5055