

Information for Patients and Carers

Hydration during Radiotherapy

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy horizontal bands in shades of blue, transitioning from a lighter blue at the top to a darker blue at the bottom.

Hydration for oncology patients

Water makes up two thirds of our body. It is vital we drink enough fluid to maintain a healthy balance. Many people get dehydrated by not drinking enough fluid or by losing fluids and not replacing them. Cancer and some of its related treatments can lead to you not having enough fluid in your body. If you are struggling with hydration during your radiotherapy treatment please speak to a radiographer.

Causes of dehydration

Cancer and treatments such as radiotherapy, chemotherapy, targeted cancer drugs and immunotherapy can cause the following side effects:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Sweating due to a fever
- Loss of appetite

These side effects, when severe, might stop you from eating and drinking enough. Or cause you to lose more fluids and salts (electrolytes) from your body than you can take in. When this happens, it is called dehydration. If dehydration is left untreated, it can become severe.

Severe dehydration is a medical emergency and requires medical attention.

Symptoms of dehydration

The symptoms of dehydration include:

Mild	Moderate	Severe
Tiredness	Headaches	Nausea
Muscle weakness	Low urine output	Confusion
Dizziness	Dry mouth, skin and eyes	Low blood pressure
Constipation		Raised body temperature
		Pain when urinating

Good hydration prevents

- Urinary Tract Infections (UTI's)
- Headaches
- Constipation
- Dizziness that can lead to falls
- Confusion
- Kidney stones

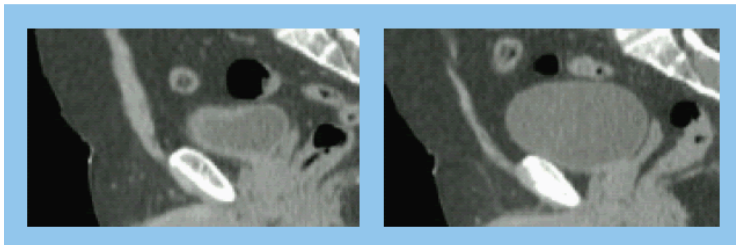
How you can stay hydrated

You should drink plenty of fluids such as water, squash and fruit juice to stay hydrated; and try to avoid alcohol and caffeine as these can actually dehydrate you and irritate your bladder. The key is to drink regularly throughout the day (at least 8-10 glasses of fluid a day). Do not wait until you are thirsty, sip water throughout the day to prevent dehydration. If you are finding it difficult to keep water down because you are vomiting, try drinking small amounts at a time to keep hydrated. You should also try to drink more if the weather is particularly hot, if you are unsure please seek advice from a radiographer.

Hydration for radiotherapy to the pelvis

Hydration is particularly important if you are receiving radiotherapy to the pelvis, as the size of your bladder may impact the accuracy of the treatment. If you are dehydrated, this means that any water you may drink for your treatment does not go into the bladder as needed. Instead, your body uses it elsewhere to hydrate the rest of your body. This can impact how your internal anatomy is positioned if your bladder is different to how it was at the CT planning scan. A similar sized bladder helps to ensure that the radiotherapy treatment is delivered accurately, which in turn helps to reduce any bladder and bowel side effects that you may experience.

Below is an example of how variable the size of the bladder can be, which has an impact on the position of your surrounding anatomy and may impact your treatment.



Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:
Radiotherapy Reception **(01772) 522900**

Appointments **(01772) 522752**

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

Macmillan at Rosemere Cancer Centre

<https://tinyurl.com/38z3d2fy>

(01772) 523709

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This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

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