

Radiation Therapy: Full Bladder Instructions

Radiation Therapy: Full Bladder Instructions

Why is it important to have a full bladder for my treatments?

Some organs in your pelvis move and change position depending on the size and shape of your bladder. When your bladder is very full compared to when it is very empty, a lot of changes can take place in your pelvis that may have an effect on your treatments. It is important that your bladder is **about the same size** every day when you come for your treatment planning appointment and daily treatments.

For example, for patients getting radiation treatments for prostate cancer, the goal is to aim the radiation to the prostate only and ensure the surrounding areas get little or no radiation at all. As a result it is important to have the radiation treatment area as small as possible while making sure that the prostate stays within this small treatment area. By having your bladder at the same fullness each day, the movement of your prostate will be reduced.

If you are receiving radiation treatments to your pelvis for a cancer such as colon or rectum, the fullness of your bladder may help cut down on the side effects from your treatments. Often the radiation fields for this type of treatment can include some of your small intestine, or small bowel. By having a full bladder, a portion of your small bowel can be pushed out of the radiation field. This may decrease your chances and severity of diarrhea.

You can ask your health care team why it is important to have a full bladder for treatment. They will be able to explain why this is needed for your treatment plan.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

How do I ensure I have a full bladder for my treatments?

The following instructions should help you maintain a bladder with about the same fullness every day:

- **45 minutes before your appointment, empty your bladder.**
- **Drink 500 mL of water right away.**
- **Do not empty your bladder until after your treatment is over.**
- **Do not drink any other fluids while you are waiting for treatment.**

If you have difficulty holding your bladder full for 45 minutes, please tell a member of the staff. You may be asked to hold your bladder full for 30 minutes instead.

Does the 500 mL of liquid have to be water?

It is best that the 500 mL of liquid be water. If you have a difficult time drinking water then it is best to substitute with a juice like apple or cranberry.

What if I cannot hold my full bladder until my treatment?

Often it is difficult to keep your bladder full until your appointment time. This can happen if the machine you are being treated on is running a little behind. Try to hold your bladder full for treatment, but if you cannot, check in at the reception desk and then empty your bladder to relieve your discomfort. The staff at the reception desk will notify the therapists who are treating you. Someone from your treatment machine should come and let you know when to fill your bladder back up with more water and when they will take you in for your appointment.

Questions you may want to ask your Health Care Team:

- Why do I need to have my bladder full for treatment every day?
- How much water do I need to drink and how soon before my appointment?
- Who do I speak to if I can't hold my bladder full until my appointment?

Please visit the following link for a video about having a full bladder:

<https://vimeo.com/229592469>

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

Nova Scotia Health Authority
www.nshealth.ca

*Prepared by: Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program
Approved by: NSCCP Patient Education Committee
Designed by: Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program Staff*

The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.
The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider. The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

NSCCP-1005 Updated March 2018 ©Nova Scotia Health Authority