

Side Effects from Radiation Treatment to the Prostate

Canterbury Regional Cancer and Haematology Service

Your doctor has recommended that you have a course of radiation therapy. This leaflet contains information about the treatment and its short and long term side effects. Each person reacts differently to treatment so the side effects can be different for each person. This leaflet discusses the most common.

There are two types of common side effects with radiation treatment to the prostate. There are **short term** effects which happen during or shortly after the treatment and **long term** effects which **may** happen months to years later.

The **short term** side effects that may happen are:

- Lethargy/tiredness
- Skin reaction
 - redness, dryness (similar to sunburn)
 - possible hair loss (in the treated area)
 - irritation of skin in the anal area
- Bowel Upset
 - loose bowel motions (diarrhoea)
 - a feeling of urgency to move your bowels
 - bleeding when passing a bowel motion
 - a mucous discharge
 - pain on passing a bowel motion
- Bladder Upset
 - an increase in the number of times you pass urine
 - decrease in urinary flow
 - stinging on passing urine

While on treatment you will be seen weekly by your doctor, who will help you to manage these side effects if they happen.

The **long term** side effects that may happen are:

- Bowels
 - a permanent change in your bowel habits
 - a bloody/mucous discharge
- Bladder
 - a permanent change in your bladder habits
- Altered sexual function and fertility
- It is very rare but radiation therapy can cause a second cancer

If you have any concerns about the side effects of treatment, please discuss this with your doctor.

What happens now?

Radiation treatment is given daily (Monday - Friday) for approximately 7 weeks. Before your course of radiation treatment can start you will need to attend the Oncology Department for the planning of your treatment. This appointment will be sent to you in the mail along with some bowel and bladder preparation instructions. Please follow these before coming to your planning appointment.

More information about radiation treatment and its side effects can be found in your information folder or through The Cancer Society. You can contact them on 0800 226237, visit their website (www.cancernz.org.nz) or visit them on the ground floor of the Oncology Department.

This space has been left blank so that you can make notes or write down any questions that you may have:

Instructions for patients receiving radiation treatment for prostate cancer

Your doctor has advised that you have a course of radiation therapy to your prostate. Each day the position of your prostate changes based upon how full your bladder and bowels are. The information in this leaflet will help you to reduce these changes so that we can target your prostate accurately and possibly reduce some of the side effects of the treatment. The aim is to get your **bowels empty** and your **bladder comfortably full** for each appointment with us.

Please follow the advice on this sheet starting today and continue to follow it until the end of your radiation treatment

Full Bladder Instructions

These instructions will help you make sure that you bladder is *comfortably full* for all your appointments in radiation therapy

For your **planning scan appointment: Please arrive in the department 40 minutes before your appointment time. A radiation therapist will collect you from the waiting room. From here you will be asked to:**



If you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have trouble holding the quantity of water, let the radiation therapists know when you arrive for your scan or treatment.

Helpful hint:

500mls is the same as:

- A full Cancer Society Water bottle (provided at planning appointment) or
- A pint glass or
- 4 plastic cups in the department waiting room or
- 2 measuring cups

Note: It is important for you to stay hydrated throughout the day (including weekends) as this will affect how much water gets to your bladder. We recommend you drink at least **1.5 Litres** of water each day. If you have an early morning appointment, remember to drink water when you wake up.

Bowel Preparation Instructions

The aim of these instructions is to ensure you have an *empty bowel* for your planning scan and all your other radiation treatment appointments.

One hour before your CT planning scan and your radiation treatment appointments please try to empty your bowels and pass wind.

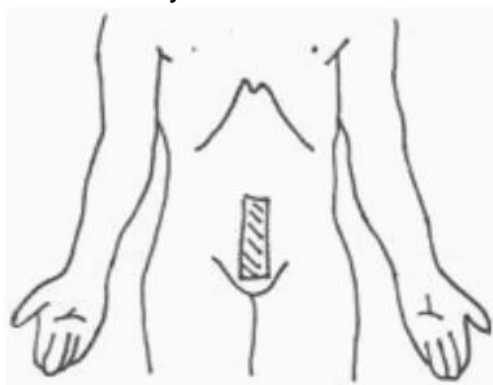
Please look at the bowel motion flowchart over the page and follow the advice from today until the end of your radiation treatment. The food list should also be used to help you have regular bowel motions.

Note:

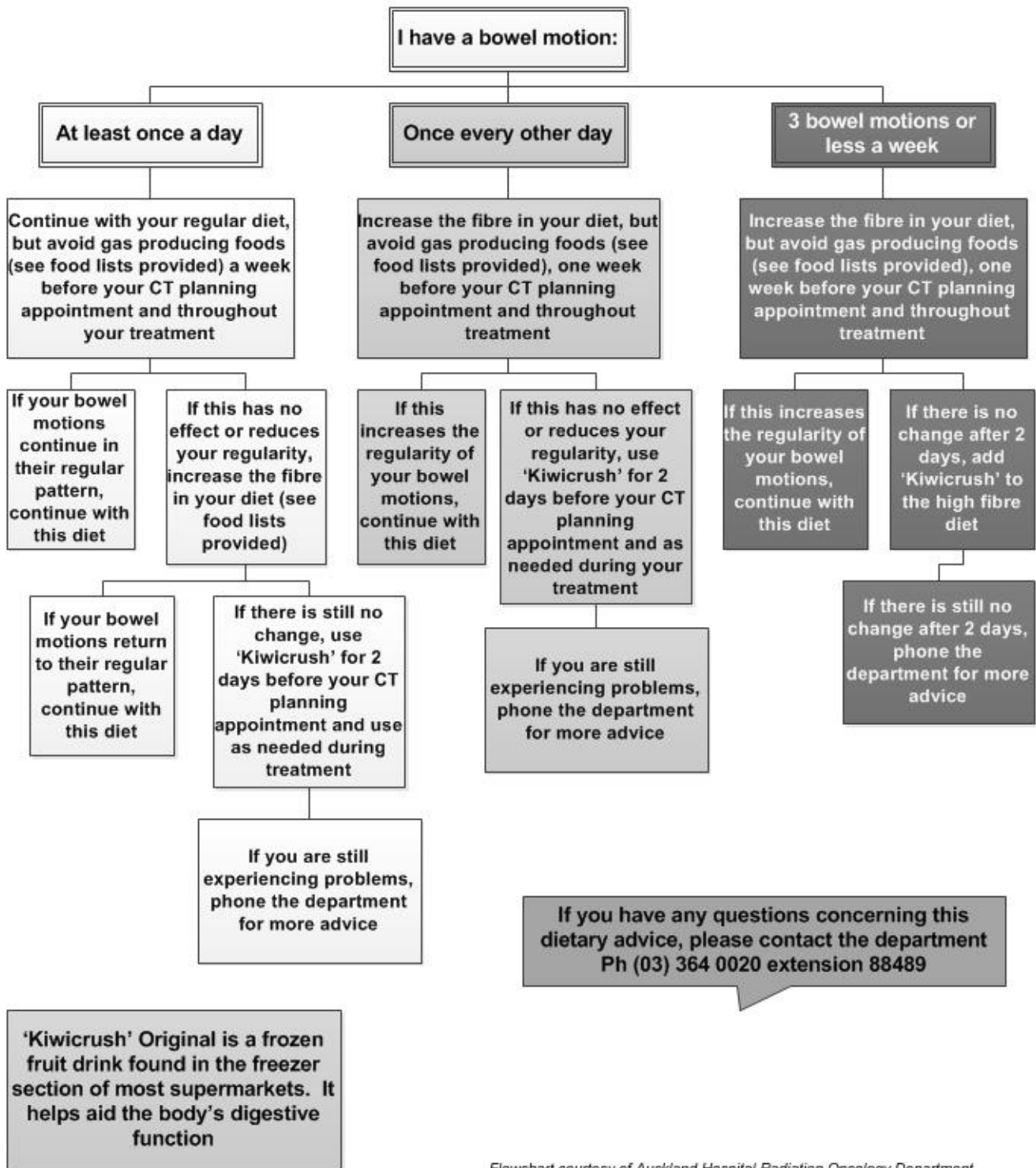
Your bladder and your bowel are reviewed by the radiation therapists on both the CT scan and on the treatment machine to check your bladder and bowel preparation is okay each day.

Shaving

On the day before your planning CT, please shave a strip of pubic hair from just below your belly button to the pubic bone, the width of a shaving razor. See the diagram below. This is to make it easier for the radiation therapists to place the permanent tattoo dot that is used to get you in the right position for treatment each day.



The radiation therapy team are here to help you - Please call the department to talk to a radiation therapist if you have any questions or concerns about your bladder or bowel preparation – Ph (03) 364 0020 extension 88489



Flowchart courtesy of Auckland Hospital Radiation Oncology Department

Gassy Foods to Avoid	High Fibre Food
<p><i>This list contains food <u>that may</u> make you feel gassy</i></p> <p>DRIED BEANS & LENTILS Baked Beans Kidney Beans Beans Legumes</p> <p>FRUIT Apples – raw Dried fruit</p> <p>VEGETABLES Broccoli Brussel Sprouts Cabbage Corn Cucumbers Lettuce Onions Peas</p> <p>OTHER Carbonated (fizzy) drinks Whipped desserts Beer Sparkling Wine</p> <p>NB: Dairy products, meat/chicken/fish are all OK to eat</p> <p>Other helpful hints to reduce gas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat slowly and chew food well • Chew with your mouth closed • Do not chew gum • Sip beverages rather than gulping • Do not drink through a straw • Try not to talk while you are eating 	<p><i>Increase these high fibre foods gradually. Increase <u>fluid intake</u> as you increase fibre.</i></p> <p>FRUIT – all fresh Berries – frozen or fresh Citrus fruit and juices Figs, dried Soft cooked prunes and juice Kiwifruit and juice Feijoa Fruit with edible seeds</p> <p>VEGETABLES Tomato Celery Green beans Raw vegetables Pumpkin with skin</p> <p>WHOLEGRAIN BREADS AND CEREALS Bran cereal, Weetbix Wholemeal/grain bread Rolled oats Whole wheat Pasta Brown rice</p> <p>ALL NUTS AND SEEDS</p> <p>NB: Dairy products, meat/chicken/fish are all OK to eat</p> <p>Other hints to promote regular bowel motions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat regularly and avoid skipping meals • Increase physical activity • Drink 1.5-2 litres of fluid per day

Information courtesy of Wellington Radiation Oncology Department