

Dietary advice for patients who are constipated because of radiotherapy

Having radiotherapy to your abdominal area can irritate your bowel, and in some cases, cause constipation. To help control this we recommend that you increase the amount of fibre in your diet.

Suggestions for a high fibre diet:

- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Increase the amount of liquids you drink each day. This can help to soften your stools, making them easier to pass. All drinks, especially fruit juices, can help.
- Try eating wholemeal, brown or granary bread, wholemeal pasta and brown rice rather than white bread, white rice and white pasta.
- Try eating oats or wholegrain cereals, such as muesli, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix and porridge, as all are high in fibre. Cornflakes, rice crispies and Special K are low in fibre and should be avoided.
- Eat plenty of raw vegetables, salad and fresh fruits and try dried fruits, nuts, beans, lentils, pulses, Quorn and rice puddings.

If you have tried all of the suggestions above but your constipation hasn't improved after a week, you may want to try a laxative. These are available from a chemist.

Further help

Tell your treatment radiographer about any changes to your bowel habits and he or she will advise you what to do.

Your treatment radiographer can make an appointment with a dietitian at any time during your treatment. This is especially helpful for meal suggestions or if you are following any other diets such as a low fat diet or if you have diabetes.

If your symptoms don't improve, tell your consultant who may prescribe a medicine to help.

Support services

Radiotherapy treatment at Bupa Cromwell Hospital also includes eight counselling sessions. These are available for all patients and relatives.

Contact

Should you have any concerns or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Radiotherapy reception +44 (0)20 7460 5626/7
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If the Radiotherapy department is unavailable please contact the Oncology ward on +44 (0)20 7460 5992, or the Dietetics department on +44 (0)20 7460 5566.

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