Prostate Treatment Planning in Radiation Oncology

A CT scan uses x-rays to produce a detailed image of structures inside the body. It is often ordered for patients with cancer who are to receive radiotherapy treatment. A CT scan done in Radiation Oncology is used for treatment planning only. In most cases, it is done before your treatments begin. It is only used and viewed by your radiation doctor.

- **If you are afraid of being in confined space or foresee discomfort** with the placement of a catheter into the bladder, please let us know ahead of time. Medicine can be given to help you relax. **If medicine is used to help you relax, you must arrange for someone to drive you to and from the clinic. You should not drive or make important decisions until the next day.**

- **Let us know if you have an allergy to Betadine, latex, or lidocaine.**

- **If you are going to have a catheter put into your rectum,** use 1 Fleets (phosphate) enema 2-4 hours before your CT scan. This can be purchased at any drugstore. You do not need a prescription.

What to Expect

In order to plan your treatment, you will be asked to lie on a narrow table. You will be asked to lie on your back or your stomach. A catheter will be put into your penis so that liquid contrast can be put into your bladder. This bladder catheter will be placed during this planning session only. It will not need to be placed for your actual treatments.

Before the catheter is inserted into your penis, a germ-killing liquid will be used to clean the skin. A numbing gel will also be used to make the insertion more comfortable. You may feel some burning as the catheter is placed. This is very common. We may ask you to take slow deep breaths. We may also ask you to “bear down” as if you were urinating. These actions will help to relax your muscles. After the catheter is placed, we will put contrast liquid into it. The contrast will help your doctor to see the size of your bladder.

**If you still have your prostate gland,** a second catheter will be put into your rectum. There is a small balloon at the end of this catheter. The catheter will be placed in your rectum before each of your radiation therapy treatments. The balloon will be filled with a small amount of air. It is
left in place while you are on the table receiving your treatment. It is removed each day after your treatment is finished. **If your prostate gland has been removed** you will not have this second catheter.

If a second catheter is put into your rectum, it will be done after the first catheter is put into your penis. A lubricant will be used and the catheter will be inserted slowly and gently. After the catheter is in your rectum, some air will be put into the catheter. This will help to push the rectal wall out of the treatment field and reduce long-term side effects.

**Before the scan**

Check in at the Radiation Oncology Reception desk. Try to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment time.

You may eat and drink before your treatment planning CT scan.

You may be asked to remove part of your clothing. Jeans, underwear, or other types of clothing that contain metal and hooks may need to be removed. You will be given a gown, robe, and blanket, if needed.

**During the CT Scan**

The narrow table you are on will move into the “donut hole” portion of the scanner.

You will be alone in the room. We can see you through a window and hear you on a monitor. You will need to lie quietly during the scan. There is no pain during the scan itself. It takes about 20 minutes for the scan. If you need something or have any problems, please tell the therapist.

**After the scan**

The bladder and rectal catheters will be removed. You should feel no discomfort as that happens. You may have a burning feeling the next time you urinate. This should go away.
within 24 hours. Drinking extra fluids should help. If the burning persists, please call the radiation oncology clinic.

Planning for your treatment can take up to a week and sometimes longer. Once your treatment plan is complete and approved by your radiation doctor, the therapist will call you to schedule your treatments.

**Daily treatments**

You will need to arrive with a fairly full bladder for each treatment. Unless told to do otherwise, you may eat and drink your normal diet before and after your daily treatments. If you had a catheter put into your rectum for your CT scan, you will have one put into your rectum before each treatment.

You will be placed on the treatment table. We will line you up according to your treatment plan. We will check your position daily either by ultrasound or CT scan. Once your position is checked, we will give your treatment. Treatment times can vary but the average time is about 5 to 10 minutes. Once your daily treatment is complete, we will remove the rectal balloon. On average, your total time on a daily basis from the set up to the finish of treatment will be 20 to 30 minutes.

Your doctor will see you at least once a week during your treatment and more often if needed. A nurse will see you at regular times during your treatments.

**Questions or concerns**

If you have any questions, please call Radiation Oncology at (608) 263-8500 Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. After hours, your call will be answered by the paging operator. Ask for the Radiation Oncology doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, please call 1-800-323-8942.