

Insertion of a rectal spacer for radiotherapy



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This leaflet is for patients having a rectal spacer inserted before radiotherapy treatment to the prostate. It provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital. It also outlines the benefits and risks of having a rectal spacer. If you have any further questions, please speak to your consultant, specialist nurse or radiographer.

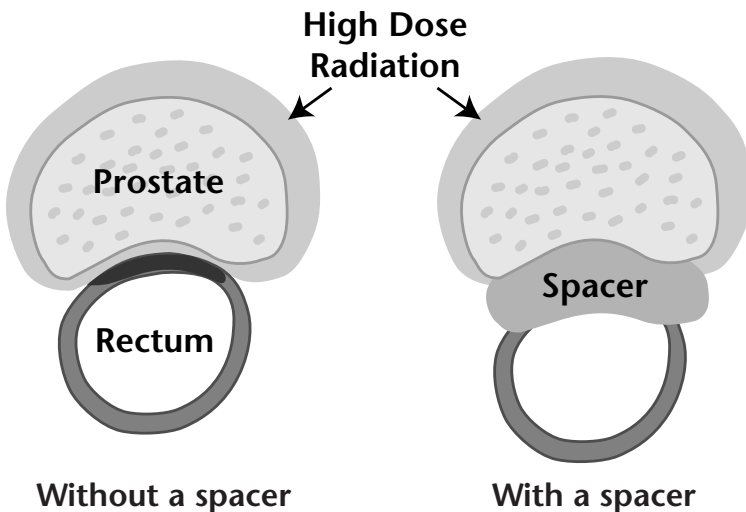
What is a rectal spacer?

A rectal spacer is a small amount of gel that is inserted into the space between your prostate and rectum.

Why should I have a rectal spacer?

The aim of radiotherapy to the prostate is to deliver a high dose of radiation to the prostate to kill the cancer cells. The tissues and organs which lie close to the prostate, such as the rectum, will also receive some of this radiation. This can lead to side effects.

A rectal spacer is used to push your rectum away from your prostate, and therefore away from the high radiation dose. This can help to reduce potential side effects that you may experience during and after your radiotherapy.



What are the risks?

If the spacer is inserted incorrectly, for example into a vessel or into the rectum, then there is a very small risk (less than 1 in 100 people) of complications. If this happens, you would have to wait until your body absorbed the gel before the procedure could be repeated. This usually takes about 3 months and may therefore delay your radiotherapy treatment.

How can I prepare for the procedure?

- The procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic, therefore there is no need to fast.
- It is helpful if your rectum is empty before the procedure. If you suffer from constipation, please speak with your GP a few days before your appointment so that they can prescribe a laxative.
- Expect to be in the department for around 2 hours - although the procedure will only take around 30 minutes.
- We will ask you to provide a urine sample when you arrive.
- We will also check your temperature, blood pressure, pulse and oxygen levels.
- If you have diabetes we may check a blood sugar level. If your blood sugar level is above 12mmols, your procedure will be postponed due to the risk of infection.
- You will be given an antibiotic tablet around 30 minutes before the procedure.

Medication

It is important that you let us know if you are taking any antiplatelet medicines (for example, aspirin or clopidogrel) or any blood thinning medicines (for example, warfarin, rivaroxaban, edoxaban, apixaban). These may need to be stopped temporarily before the procedure.

We need to make sure it is safe for you to stop taking medications before instructing you to do so. Therefore, please continue to take your usual medicines unless you are told otherwise.

Please let us know if you are taking any regular medicines (including anything you buy over the counter, and any herbal/homeopathic medicines). You will be asked about any allergies that you have prior to the procedure.

Consent – asking for your consent

We want to involve you in decisions about your treatment and care. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the procedure to insert the spacer and you understand what it involves.

What happens during the rectal spacer insertion?

- The insertion of the spacer takes place under local anaesthetic.
- After the local anaesthetic has been given time to work, the spacer device will be inserted through a small needle between your rectum and your prostate.
- During the procedure, you will also have 3 small gold markers inserted into your prostate.
- Ultrasound imaging will be used to make sure the spacer and markers are in the correct place.
- The procedure takes about 30 minutes.

Will I feel any pain?

There is not usually much pain from this procedure. However, you may experience a little discomfort initially when we administer the local anaesthetic. This will quickly disappear. It is common to feel a little tender after the procedure. Pain killers can be taken as required.

What happens after the procedure?

Passing urine may be a little uncomfortable at first. If you have problems with this you may need a catheter inserted, although most patients do not need this.

It is advisable to have someone drive you home after the procedure.

What do I need to do after I go home?

When you go home, please drink plenty of clear fluids every day. You should try to drink 1.5-2 litres of water a day. It is best to limit any caffeine (tea or coffee), fizzy drinks and alcohol.

You should be able to return to normal activities once any inflammation has settled. This usually takes about three days.

Does the spacer need to be removed after I finish my treatment?

The spacer will remain in place for the duration of your treatment. The gel begins to turn to a liquid 3-6 months after insertion and is gradually absorbed by your body. You will not feel the spacer device.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Your next appointment will be for a CT scan for your radiotherapy planning. This will be in the Radiotherapy Department. This appointment will be sent to you in the post.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about rectal spacer insertion, please contact:

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