

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.

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:

- **1/2 Hour before your appointment, empty your bladder.**
- **Drink 2 glasses of water (5 ounces each) 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.**

Do the 2 glasses of liquid have to be water?

It is best that the 2 five-ounce glasses of liquid be water. Water and glasses are available near the reception desk where you check in for treatment. 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 2 more glasses of 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?



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