

Using laxatives during Radiotherapy

Information for patients



Leeds Cancer
Centre

This leaflet explains why the use of laxatives may be recommended for your Radiotherapy procedures. It also explains what the possible side-effects are.

What are laxatives?

Laxatives are medicines which help you have a bowel movement (have a poo) if you're constipated. They also soften hard stools (poo), and some may stimulate your bowels to get them moving.

Why am I being asked to take laxatives?

To reduce your side effects and ensure that your bowels are empty enough for Radiotherapy it is sometimes necessary to use laxatives. Often lifestyle changes - eating high fibre food, drinking more fluids and exercising more - can help to move your bowels. However sometimes medication is required.

How should I take a laxative?

You have been asked to take a laxative to improve the way you empty your bowels.

- You should NOT use laxatives and enemas at the same time.
- You should ensure that you drink plenty of fluids as this makes the laxative more effective.
- You should take your laxative as prescribed (usually once a day). Examples include Movicol one sachet a day, Laxido one sachet a day, Senna two tablets at night.

- Use a laxative every day for approximately five days before your planning scan, and five days before the first day of radiotherapy treatment.
- You should stop using the laxatives if your bowel habits change (going more frequently), or if you are passing very loose, watery stools or if you experience any stomach cramps.

What are the side effects of using laxatives?

In general, you should not experience any issues. However, there is a chance that the laxative may give you some unpleasant side effects:

- Bloating
- Excess gas
- Stomach cramps
- Stomach upset
- Dehydration

If you experience any of these, you should stop using the laxative and speak to one of the radiographers looking after you.

They can be contacted via telephone: 0113 206 8159 (Monday to Friday 8:00 am - 6:00 pm).



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