

Biodegradable spacer insertion to reduce rectal toxicity during radiotherapy for prostate cancer

Information for the public

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There is not enough good evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is. So, it can only be done with special arrangements. This means you will have regular appointments afterwards to check how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

Radiotherapy to treat prostate cancer can damage the rectum (the end part of the bowel). This can cause side effects such as bleeding, diarrhoea and bowel (faecal) incontinence. The aim of this procedure is to reduce the amount of radiation reaching the rectum during radiotherapy, which may reduce the damage. It is done using local or general anaesthetic some time before radiotherapy starts. The rectum is pushed slightly away from the prostate by inserting a balloon or injecting a gel (spacer) between them. The spacer stays in place during radiotherapy. It is biodegradable, which means it breaks down and is absorbed by the body over several months.

The [NHS website](#) may have information on your condition and treatment options.

You can [search the NHS website for information about consultants and hospitals](#) that offer this procedure.

Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

Information and support

- [NICE's information on interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on interventional procedures recommendations](#) explains what special arrangements are.

[Tackle Prostate Cancer](#) (0800 035 5302) can give you advice and support.

You can also get support from your local [Healthwatch](#).

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